6.

THREE

ESSAYS.

THREE ESSAYS,

ON

TAXATION OF INCOME,

WITH REMARKS ON THE LATE ACT OF PARLIAMENT ON THAT SUBJECT.

ON

THE NATIONAL DEBT; THE PUBLIC FUNDS;

ON

THE PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE LAW FOR THE SALE OF THE LAND TAX;

AND ON

THE PRESENT STATE OF AGRICULTURE IN GREAT BRITAIN;

WITH

A SCHEME

FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EVERY BRANCH OF IT,

AND

REMARKS

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NATIONAL PRODUCE AND CONSUMPTION.

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1799.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM PITT.

SIR,

In preſenting you with the following Eſſays I do not offer an apology for the trouble which they may give you; for, in the act of doing it, I feel that I am performing an eſſential duty to my country, by ſtating to thoſe who have the charge of government a number of circumſtances of which they are not, perhaps, ſufficiently aware, but with which they ought to be minutely acquainted. I do it alſo in the firm belief of their meeting with your approbation; and that the objects which they hold forth will ſcarcely fail to receive your ſupport.

Although the whole of what I have ſaid is compriſed in three general heads or diviſions, you will at once perceive, that they advert, with ſufficient minuteneſs, to all that can be conceived to relate to the general ſafety and welfare of the realm.

You will likewiſe perceive, that, in various parts of this production, things are noticed and propoſed, which, either from their being new, or not generally the ſubject of diſcuſſion, may, by thoſe who read ſu-

perficially, be judged to have in view the introduction of innovation, or what is commonly termed reform. But it will not, Sir, escape your penetration, that he who can with anxiety endeavour to promote the various plans of public utility, to which only these observations relate, can have no hazardous reform in contemplation.

Although in these times, however, while the public mind is still disturbed, and no two men agree on what is best, it must be the desire of all good citizens to avoid every political reform, which, even in the attempt, might bring ruin on the whole fabric of our constitution; yet, believing, as I do, that every period is proper for meliorating the condition of mankind, and that times of difficulty are the best for schemes being brought forth with this interesting object in view, when those who are in indigence, or otherwise in distress, more particularly require to be solaced, I have, from this and other considerations, been induced to offer some views and measures to your attention; which, if fully carried into effect, will afford, as I have much reason to believe, satisfaction and joy to the whole nation; and, as a consequence thereof, would with much certainty tend, even with more than all the restrictive laws that can be made, or the most formidable armaments that can be raised, to give full security to the nation, both against commotions at home, and invasion from abroad.

The rage for political innovation, with which

mankind

mankind have for ſome time paſt been convulſed, has happily, I hope, in Great Britain, paſt its height. To the ſteady conduct that has been purſued, during the riſe and progreſs of this calamity, all muſt acknowledge that we are indebted for that ſecurity in which we have remained; but, that we may continue to enjoy the benefits ariſing from this repoſe, more muſt be done, otherwiſe all that we have gained may be quickly loſt: nor will the taſk be either difficult or tedious. In the courſe of the enſuing obſervations thoſe means are detailed from which alone, perhaps, complete ſecurity on this point can be obtained; and they are ſhortly theſe: Let all aſſeſſments be levied more equally than hitherto they have been, by placing them entirely on income, and not on articles of conſumption, and proportionally more on thoſe who are highly opulent than on the middle or lower orders of the people. Let the operation of the ſinking fund, and of other plans that may be purſued for the reduction of our public debt, have it in view to leſſen the taxes to a certain amount yearly which have already been placed upon conſumption, ſo that the preſent generation may immediately derive advantage from the meaſure; and let full encouragement be given to all that relates to the improvement of agriculture; by which our lands would be rendered more productive, abundance provided for the inhabitants, our population increaſed, and more patrioti'm and public virtue inſtilled into the minds of all claſſes of men than they are ever

likely to poſſeſs while their views are entirely placed on the purſuit of thoſe extenſive fortunes which they are now, perhaps, too frequently, enabled to accumulate; and the moſt important advantages will be gained.

A more complete application to agricultural purſuits than of late has been encouraged in England, would give a different turn to the public mind. It would quickly tend to remove that ſpirit of turbulence from the people, which, in other employments, they are more apt to acquire, and would every where produce more correct views of independence and freedom. Every man being occupied in the tillage of a favoured ſpot, on which both he and his forefathers may have ſpent their days in happineſs, while, in ſuch circumſtances, all would oppoſe, with a degree of reſolution not to be reſiſted, every attack of the enemies of their country, and would thus ſecure their independence to the lateſt ages; none would give reſiſtance to the laws, nor would political reforms be ever again heard of; excepting in ſo far as a wiſe government might judge it neceſſary to correct every tendency to imperfection, which, from the lapſe of time and other circumſtances, might take place in the conſtitution over which it was appointed to preſide.

All this, Sir, I believe to be in your power to accompliſh; for all claſſes of men, and I ſpeak from ample opportunities of acquiring information, are ready to co-operate in ſuch meaſures as, for this

purpoſe,

purpoſe, government may incline to adopt. You have only, therefore, to turn your mind towards it, and all difficulties will ceaſe.

I have thus, Sir, as well as in the following Eſſays, laid many important matters before you; in which, however, I claim no farther merit than that of ſtating, with more freedom than has ever perhaps been done to you before, a number of circumſtances which appear to require an early, firm, and decided conduct on the part of thoſe to whom the government of our country is entruſted; by which they may be enabled to ſave and to tranſmit to future ages the beſt conſtitution which has ever yet been produced; but of which we may otherwiſe be deprived, in the courſe of that ſtruggle, in which, for a conſiderable time, we are ſtill likely to be engaged.

THE AUTHOR.

March 1799.

In publiſhing the following Eſſays the author has no object in view but that of exciting in others a more particular attention than appears to have been hitherto given to ſome of the moſt important circumſtances in the preſent ſituation of Britain; all of them deeply intereſting to the whole nation, in ſo far as they will be found to involve almoſt every conſideration on which our preſent ſecurity, as well as future proſperity, may be ſuppoſed to depend.

Being accuſtomed to commit all his opinions to paper, on matters which he judges worth his conſideration, theſe, and ſome others of a ſimilar tendency, were communicated, a conſiderable time ago, to a friend, on whoſe judgment he could rely: and, as the opinions which they contained were many of them new, and met with his friend's approbation, he was perſuaded, on his earneſt requeſt, to tranſmit them to government.

Having long been convinced, that taxes on articles of conſumption had been carried much too far, and being of opinion that nothing but an equal aſſeſſment of income could afford thoſe ſupplies which government appeared to require, he was thereby the more readily induced to offer theſe communications than otherwiſe he might have been. They were

accordingly

accordingly ſent; but, in the hurry of buſineſs, which neceſſarily prevails in every public department, they might, very probably, be ſoon overlooked, and afterwards entirely forgotten.

Some time thereafter a very excellent pamphlet was publiſhed by the Biſhop of Llandaff, in which the ſame opinion, partly on ſimilar arguments, was ſupported. On a point of ſuch general importance, the ſame views would probably occur to others; and it now appears that they have alſo met with the approbation of government. The author only regrets, that the plan for levying a tax upon income is not to be carried fully into effect at once, as the nation, he is afraid, will not go ſo cordially into the meaſure of raiſing a conſiderable part of the ſupplies within the year, if they find that permanent taxes to a large amount are likewiſe to take place, as they probably would have done if this had not been to happen. With no great additional exertion the loan for this year might have been avoided entirely.

As almoſt all claſſes of men, however, appear to approve of the principles on which the taxation of income is known to act, there is reaſon to hope that, in the courſe of another year, the miniſter will altogether abandon aſſeſſments on articles of conſumption, and truſt to this alone; and, whenever the period may arrive at which this ſhall be done, he will probably find, that the taxation of income may be eaſily carried ſo far as not only to furniſh the neceſſary expences of the war, but a conſiderable ſum

yearly

yearly for the more ſpeedy reduction of our public debt, as well as for other purpoſes.

Now, that a plan is adopted by government for raiſing a tax upon income, this and other attempts for the purpoſe of adviſing the meaſure, may be ſuppoſed to be unneceſſary. The chief intention of the author in coming forward at this time with his views of this aſſeſſment, is, that although the plan which government has judged proper to prefer is the beſt perhaps that has appeared, yet being, in his opinion, capable of much amendment, not only in the manner of carrying it into effect, but in other important circumſtances, which with much advantage might, even in this very ſeſſion of parliament, be adopted, he has thought it right in this manner to let his ſentiments be explicitly known, ſo that the views which they convey may be adopted or not, on their being fully conſidered by others, and their real importance thereby appreciated. Nor would he have judged himſelf entitled to obtrude his opinions on the public, if the ſubject to which they relate had not been long an object of his attention, on which he had collected more information than others who have not done ſo can be ſuppoſed to poſſeſs; and which he has reaſon to hope may prove uſeful in the farther proſecution of a ſcheme from which he can predict, that, if rightly conducted, the moſt important advantages will be derived.

In ſpeaking of the national debt, and of the means that appear to be beſt adapted for reducing the

amount

amount of it, the author has with freedom called in queſtion the meaſure which, with this view, was lately under the conſideration of parliament for the ſale of the land-tax; but it will appear, he hopes, that he has done ſo, not with the view of oppoſing it as a meaſure of government, which, ſo far as his feeble efforts can go, he would aſſuredly wiſh to ſupport, but from a conviction that, in its preſent form, and with the views which appear to be adopted for the application of the amount of it, much harm would enſue from it: for, although the ſale of this tax was one of the objects which, a conſiderable time ago, he ventured to mention to government, from which, under certain regulations, much benefit he thought might be derived; yet, on the plan with which it is now brought forward, that of giving an artificial value to the public funds, while to him it appears to be more for the intereſt of every claſs of the community that this ſhould never be attempted, he has judged it right decidedly to ſay ſo.

On ſome part of the views which, in the following Eſſays, are propoſed, it will probably be obſerved, particularly on the plans which the author has ventured to ſuggeſt for the reduction of our public debt, and for the improvement of agriculture, that, however deſirable and proper both of theſe objects may be, the time for bringing them forward is ill choſen; for, till peace ſhall take place, miniſters cannot be ſuppoſed to have leiſure to attend to them.

This ought not, however, in matters of ſuch im-

portance, to be held forth, as it too frequently is, without reflecting either on the cenſure which it implies on the conduct of thoſe to whom the management of government is entruſted, who, at all times, and in all circumſtances, ought, either of themſelves, or with the aſſiſtance of others whom they employ, to be able to do what the ſituation of the empire may appear to require; or, on the pernicious conſequences which might enſue from opinions of this kind being propagated and admitted.

The aid which thoſe in the charge of government have hitherto found it neceſſary to employ may be quite ſufficient for the common occurrences of office; but, as it cannot be ſuppoſed to be equal to the management of new and extenſive ſchemes, another ſource will preſently be mentioned, from which the moſt efficient aſſiſtance may at all times be obtained.

Believing, as the author very certainly does, that the ſafety of the Britiſh empire is to depend on the means that ſhall be purſued for the more ſpeedy reduction of our public debt; more eſpecially of the advantage that may be taken of this for the immediate diminution of the preſent taxes on articles of conſumption; and being warranted in the foundation of this opinion, from finding it, in a very extenſive communication which he is obliged to ſupport over a conſiderable part of the kingdom, to be the ſentiments of a great proportion of the people, he does not heſitate to ſay, that the worſt conſequences

might

might be expected were a meaſure of ſuch neceſſity to be delayed. He cannot, therefore, give himſelf leave to ſuppoſe, if this ſhall appear to be the caſe to thoſe who are entruſted with the immediate care of government, and who have not been accuſtomed to withhold their exertions when the ſtate of the empire appeared to require them, that they will poſtpone till peace ſhall take place, or till any indefinite period, a meaſure of ſuch neceſſity for the ſecurity of the realm.

Conſidering alſo how defective the preſent ſtate of our agriculture is, when compared with our conſumption; that we are obliged to apply to other nations, not merely for temporary ſupplies of corn, but regularly and ſyſtematically to a great amount yearly: that we may eventually, and even ſpeedily, be deprived of theſe ſupplies, by thoſe unforeſeen events in war which are now taking place daily: and that only a ſmall proportion of the animal food which our colonies and numerous fleets make uſe of, is furniſhed by Great Britain; while, under different management, and with the proper application of a very moderate portion of our national wealth for the improvement of agriculture, we might not only enjoy all theſe articles, produced upon our own fields, at one half of the price which we now pay for them, but be enabled to export large quantities alſo; it will not be imagined, by thoſe who are beſt acquainted with the magnitude of the evil ariſing from this neglected ſtate of our agriculture, that, in the following Eſſays, too

much

much has been ſaid of it, or that the ſubject is not of ſufficient importance to merit the attention of government, even during the continuance of war. All who are entitled to judge of it, from being at pains to inform themſelves of the facts which relate to it, well know, that no ſubject whatever can, either in peace or war, be of more importance to the Empire than every circumſtance at this moment is that relates to the improvement of agriculture; and, therefore, that government cannot, in any ſituation, be more neceſſarily employed than in regulating all that can tend, with the greateſt poſſible diſpatch, to carry this ſource of our national comfort, proſperity, and ſafety, to the higheſt degree of perfection which it can be made to attain.

Let thoſe who doubt of this conſider the preſent uncertain ſtate of the continent, which ſtill may be of long continuance, and ſtill more under the power of our implacable enemies; let them alſo conſider the conſequences which, in this view, might reſult from our ſiſter kingdom continuing in that perturbed ſtate which has long prevailed in it; that the only ſources which we enjoy for thoſe large ſupplies of ſalt proviſions required for our fleets and colonies, and of grain for home conſumption, may thus be quickly cut off from us; and then reflect on the alarm, which, from a deficiency in our crops, has twice prevailed in Britain in the courſe of the laſt ſixteen years, even during a period when we poſſeſſed the advantage of a free importation from every corn country in Eu-

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rope; and they will not then imagine that too much can be ſaid of this very intereſting part of our ſituation.

Plans with ſuch important objects in view muſt, no doubt, require much care, conſideration, and trouble; but to what purpoſes can the attention of government be with ſuch propriety applied as in giving ſatisfaction to thoſe over whom it preſides in whatever appears to be reaſonable? That ſchemes of this magnitude and extent, however, may the more eaſily be carried into effect, and that the miniſter may receive all the aſſiſtance from others which this would require, might not greater advantage be taken, than hitherto has been done, of the abilities and exertions of members of parliament? However anxious the miniſter may be for promoting ſchemes of utility, all who reflect on the multiplicity and load of buſineſs which falls under his charge, and which neceſſarily muſt be conducted by him, will ſee, that many things muſt be poſtponed, which, with more aſſiſtance or more leiſure on his part, might ſoon be accompliſhed. For, although the detail of every important ſcheme muſt, at all times, be managed by others, and we have much reaſon to believe that thoſe whom the miniſter employs for this purpoſe are the beſt official men that any where can be procured, yet, however great their abilities may in general be, their numbers can neither be ſuppoſed to be ſufficient, nor their opportunities for acquiring information ſo ample, as the various ſchemes would require,

which,

which, in this eventful period, may be neceſſary. Might not much of this part of our national buſineſs be conducted by committees of members of parliament? The moſt important advantages have been derived from the exertions of every committee that has yet been appointed for the inveſtigation of political matters; and the reaſon is obvious: in the election of committees men of abilities only are fixed on; chiefly thoſe, indeed, who, from their ſituation in life, their purſuits, and other circumſtances, are ſuppoſed to be peculiarly fitted for the purpoſe for which they are choſen; and who, therefore, with only one object in view, very commonly obtain all the information with regard to it which it is poſſible to procure; by which they are enabled to elucidate, in the beſt poſſible manner, every ſubject with which they are entruſted. Now, why may not ſimilar advantages be obtained in the management of every object of equal national importance? Might not permanent committees be eſtabliſhed, at the beginning of every parliament, each conſiſting of a few ſelect members? and to every committee ſome important national object being entruſted, ſuch views would ſoon be obtained of all of them as we are never likely to poſſeſs from any other plan.

In theſe committees the nation would enjoy this important advantage, of having men of the firſt abilities and knowledge in buſineſs brought into action, who, from not being enabled to deliver their ſentiments as public ſpeakers, are often entirely loſt, or

never heard of in the full meetings of parliament; but who might often be well fitted for giving the clearest and best views on every point in which they should have occasion to act with more confined numbers.

In this manner many of the most able men in the nation might at all times be employed, and with no expence to government, in giving the utmost possible perfection to every scheme of public utility. Being collected from various ranks and employments, and from every district in Britain, they would thereby be intimately acquainted with the views and opinions of mankind on every point that might fall under the consideration of parliament; and would thus be well able to judge of the interest of every class in the community in the various acts which the legislature might find it necessary to pass. The state of the poor and poor's-rates, is, in England, an object meriting the immediate and most serious attention of government; and the same observation will, with equal propriety, apply to the state of the tithes—of the crown lands, wastes, and commons; and yet the discussion of all of these points must be postponed from year to year, even till another century shall perhaps be considerably advanced, if they be not entrusted to others than those who are employed in the daily routine of official business. But, with the assistance of permanent committees of the most intelligent members of both houses of parliament, these, and every other object of public utility, might be quickly considered and understood;

derſtood; the moſt uſeful improvements ſuggeſted which any of them might be capable of receiving; and the diſpatch of buſineſs, in every department, greatly promoted.

Nothing could, with more certainty, tend to improve our national agriculture than the charge of it being, in the firſt inſtance, given to a committee of members of parliament; many of whom, being fully acquainted with the defects which it labours under, and choſen, as they might be, from every part of the nation, the moſt complete information would thus be obtained on all that relates to it, and the beſt plan formed for the future conduct of the board to which it would thereafter be entruſted. Let us therefore hope, that the miniſter will ſpeedily bring forward a ſcheme from which ſuch important national advantages would enſue, and from which he himſelf would derive much immediate ſatisfaction, as well as more permanent gratitude from every claſs of his fellow-citizens, than hitherto has ever accrued from the moſt uſeful meaſures in which he has been concerned. But if, from the conſtant occupation of his time in matters which he may judge to be of greater neceſſity, he ſhall not be enabled to appear in it; or if, from not being convinced of the utility of the meaſure, the conſequence, perhaps, of never having made it an object of his attention, he may not be inclined to act in it; this ſurely is no reaſon for the taſk being declined by others. It ought more eſpecially to be the immediate object of country

gentlemen; and, if any of them ſhall take charge of it, and move for an agricultural committee being appointed, the miniſter will act very differently from what hitherto, in ſimilar circumſtances, he has done, if he ſhall either object to it in the firſt inſtance, or ultimately refuſe his ſupport to any reaſonable plan which the committee may bring forth with regard to it.

But if land-proprietors ſhall be afraid of thoſe inquiries into their circumſtances and abilities for improving their properties, which might reſult from the appointment of an agricultural-parliamentary-committee, and ſhall, from falſe delicacy or pride, endeavour longer to conceal the exhauſted ſtate which prevails in the finances of a great proportion of their number, and, in conſequence thereof, ſhall continue in the ſame ſtate of apathy and inaction as hitherto they have done in all that relates to their intereſt, they will, in that caſe, have themſelves only to blame for all that diſtreſs which they and their families may continue to experience from their funds being altogether inadequate to the improvement of their eſtates, and from their incomes falling ſtill farther ſhort than even hitherto they have done, of thoſe ariſing to merchants, manufacturers, and every other claſs of the community.

The author, with no other motive than that which proceeds from an enthuſiaſtic zeal for all that relates to the proſperity of his country; with no neceſſity of writing for emolument; and knowing that his production

production cannot entitle him to fame; has thus, in the courſe of this Introduction, as well as in the following Eſſays, endeavoured, in plain language, although not in a ſtyle of embelliſhment, to ſet forth a number of things, which, although highly eſſential to the welfare of the whole empire, have hitherto been allowed to remain nearly altogether in a ſtate of neglect; and if, in any conſiderable degree, he ſhall ſucceed in attracting the attention of thoſe towards them who may be enabled to accompliſh the important objects which he has ventured to ſuggeſt, he ſhall never ceaſe to conſider that portion of his time which it has occupied, as having been moſt uſefully ſpent. Having no particular connexion with any ſet of men, and no more dependance on parties than they have upon him, he has, in theſe Eſſays, as on all other occaſions, given his ſentiments with that freedom, which all, who conceive that they have any thing worthy of public conſideration to communicate, ought, in his opinion, to do; and, having done this, he leaves them with others to judge of the attention to which they are entitled.

He has only farther to add, as a piece of juſtice to himſelf, that the following Eſſays, being haſtily extracted from a larger collection on ſubjects of a ſimilar tendency, they are thereby deprived of that advantage which a due regard to method and arrangement never fails to afford. To this hurried publication he has been induced to agree on the ſolicitation of two of his friends, who have been

led to believe that his obſervations may prove more particularly uſeful at this time; and this advantage will ariſe from it, that he will be enabled to judge, from the opinion which the public may form of it, whether the Eſſays which he retains ſhould ever be publiſhed or not.

ON

THE TAXATION

OF

INCOME.

The funding ſyſtem, as it is termed, by which government, when in need of extraordinary ſupplies, has been accuſtomed to borrow upon national credit, has now prevailed in Great Britain for more than a century.

When this method of raiſing money was firſt propoſed and eſtabliſhed, the effects which are now found to reſult from it, were not fully foreſeen; otherwiſe, thoſe men who voluntarily came forth with their lives and properties, ſolely with the view of giving that ſecurity to ſucceeding generations, that equitable laws and the mixed form of government which at that time was ſecured in England, ſeems alone able to afford, would not have given their conſent to it. Thoſe men, who could in this manner incur the hazard of loſing all which they poſſeſſed, and of being deprived of every enjoyment to which they had been accuſtomed, for no other purpoſe than this, would not have agreed to load

their

their offspring, with ſuch an oppreſſive and expenſive burden, if it had been poſſible for them to ſuppoſe, that it could ever arrive at the enormous height to which it has done, even in the time of their immediate ſucceſſors.

But, ſo deluſive was the influence of this ſyſtem, for a great length of time, that, till of late, it was the opinion of many, that it even tended to increaſe our national wealth and ſecurity. This, indeed, was not commonly ſupported by men of penetration; many of whom have, for theſe fifty years paſt, foreſeen and predicted thoſe diſtreſsful conſequences which are now found to reſult from it. Nor is there at this time, perhaps, a ſingle individual of ſound judgment in the nation, who does not feel and perceive, that our public debt is a very important calamity, and that we ſhould derive much real advantage, and even further ſecurity, from being free of it. Of the various baneful conſequences of this debt, we ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more particularly in different parts of this and the enſuing eſſay.

It becomes, therefore, an object of the firſt importance to all claſſes of men, that an attempt ſhould be made for reducing, with as much expedition as poſſible, the magnitude of this debt. And, as it is now obvious to all, that the means on which we have hitherto relied, the taxation of articles of conſumption, is not equal to the purpoſe, other reſources muſt either be brought forth, or we muſt

remain

remain without even a chance of getting the difficulty removed.

Fortunately for us, it appears ſtill to be in our power, by placing all future aſſeſſments upon income, inſtead of laying them on articles of conſumption, to raiſe ſuch an ample ſum yearly, as may not only put it in the power of government to add a large ſum annually to the ſinking fund, and thus ſpeedily to leſſen many of thoſe taxes which chiefly ſeem to require it; but to provide fully for the expences of the war, of whatever duration it may be. Let the people be convinced, that an efficient plan is ſet on foot for removing, in a moderate length of time, the ſevereſt part of the burdens with which they are aſſeſſed, and they will cheerfully give whatever may be required. If a tenth part of their income will not prove ſufficient, there is much reaſon to believe that they would give an eighth, a ſixth, or even a fourth, if it ſhould be requiſite. Moſt amply, indeed, would they be repaid for this kind of ſacrifice; the effect of which would be permanent, while any inconvenience or diſtreſs which ſuch an extraordinary advance might induce, would prove ſhort and temporary.

In ſome degree, the motives from which ſuch meritorious conduct would proceed, would reſemble the virtue and ſteadineſs of thoſe individuals in private life, who, with the full power of borrowing money for the removal of temporary difficulties,

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with much fortitude resolve, rather to submit to the inconvenience, than render their successors liable in the yearly payment of interest; although, in the comparison, the advantages likely to accrue from it, would prove to be greatly in favour of the public; who, in the result, would gain from this kind of conduct proportionally much more than individuals could ever expect. But, that we may be the more able to appreciate the merits of that scheme of taxation which might put these and other advantages in our power, it will be proper to compare it more particularly with the system which hitherto has prevailed, of raising all our taxes on consumption.

Of the numerous objections to which the plan of placing assessments on articles of consumption appears to be liable, the following are, perhaps, the most important.

1. Every system of taxation should affect, with as much equality as possible, the fortunes of all to whom it is meant to apply. But nothing can be more unequal than the operation of every assessment on consumption: for, while those who live fully up to their incomes, either from the necessity which the maintenance of large families may impose on them, or from any other cause; and who, by doing so, give encouragement to various arts and manufactures, are taxed upon this system over all that they are worth; those who from parsimony, or other causes, live upon a small part of their income, are

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aſſeſſed upon thoſe parts of it only: whereas, in equity, every perſon ſhould be aſſeſſed in proportion to the extent of his fortune, and not according to the manner in which he may incline to make uſe of it. Whether he ſpends the whole of his income, or only a ſmall part of it, all of it ought to be equally aſſeſſed for that protection which government gives to it. But ſo unequally does the taxation of articles of conſumption apply to wealth, that a perſon may poſſeſs the greateſt income in the nation, and yet be aſſeſſed upon a few pounds of it only, if he ſhall reſolve on reſtricting his expences.

From not conſidering the import and weight of this obſervation, government, without having it in view to commit an act of ſuch injuſtice, has hitherto acted as if it was their opinion, that all who ſpend their incomes freely, and thus encourage every artiſt in the kingdom, ſhould be ſeverely aſſeſſed for doing ſo; and that all whoſe incomes are hoarded up, without proving uſeful either to themſelves or others, ſhould eſcape.

2. Taxes on conſumption, being frequently and neceſſarily placed on articles daily uſed and under every man's obſervation; often collected ſeparately from the original coſt of the articles, and amounting, in ſome caſes, to twice their real value; have thus, at all times, been the cauſe of more national diſcontent than much larger ſums raiſed in a different manner would have produced.

3. From theſe two cauſes, as well as others, all

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aſſeſſments on conſumption are by a great proportion of mankind greatly evaded: hence the difficulty, and great expence, of collecting them; by which, in various inſtances, government receives only a ſmall proportion of the ſum which the community is forced to pay: from which alſo originates another national loſs, in the very conſiderable number of people, to the extent of many thouſands, being employed as tax-gatherers; who might, if the collection was more ſimple, be acting much more uſeful parts in ſociety.

4. Taxation on articles of conſumption acts more directly than any other means of raiſing money would probably do, againſt all our manufactures; not merely by exciting diſcontent among thoſe to whom they belong, but by putting it out of their power ſo effectually to ſupport a competition in foreign markets. Hitherto, indeed, they have proved ſucceſsful; owing, in a great meaſure, to the confuſion which has very univerſally prevailed over Europe during the war; by which we have, almoſt excluſively, ſupplied every part of it; and by which we have been enabled to pay thoſe high aſſeſſments to which we have been liable, with more eaſe than otherwiſe we might have done. But, as a return of peace will neceſſarily tend to produce manufactures in other countries, we ought to be prepared for the diminiſhed conſumption with which this may probably be attended in ours.

5. Admitting, however, that the ſyſtem of laying

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aſſeſſments on articles of conſumption was not liable to any of theſe objections, it is now, in the ſtate to which it has arrived in this country, totally unfit for the purpoſe of producing a large revenue. Almoſt every article is already ſo fully aſſeſſed, that, were more to be added, the produce would probably be diminiſhed, as already has happened with the tax on wine, and ſome others.

There is, therefore, full cauſe to ſuſpect, that while farther taxes on conſumption would, in various ways, prove injurious to the community, they would not anſwer the purpoſe of affording even a moderate ſupply to government, and that they ought therefore to give place to others not liable to theſe difficulties.

Various ſchemes have been propoſed for ſupplying the exigencies of government; but of theſe only two appear to merit conſideration: the one is that to which we have already had occaſion to advert, the Taxation of Income, and of which we ſhall preſently ſpeak more fully. The other, that of raiſing money on annuities, with the benefit of ſurvivorſhip, in the form of what is uſually termed tontines. The chief objection to tontines is, that no very conſiderable ſum could be obtained from them; but, to the extent to which they can be carried, they would not only prove uſeful to the public, but convenient to individuals; particularly to people of moderate incomes and large families, who on the ſecurity of government would come forward yearly

with conſiderable ſums for the purpoſe of ſecuring annuities to their children.

In this manner there is reaſon to believe that at leaſt one million ſterling might annually be obtained, on terms ſufficiently beneficial to government. If the legal intereſt of the money ſhould only be given at firſt, even with a ſmall deduction from each ſhare for the expence of management, the lure which the benefit of ſurvivorſhip holds forth, would, in the preſent opulent and ſpeculating ſtate of the nation, operate ſo powerfully, when connected with ſuch complete ſecurity, that this ſum, or even more, might be expected yearly to accrue from it. For, although an attempt which government made only a few years ago, for eſtabliſhing a tontine, did not ſucceed, this appeared chiefly to proceed from the intereſt propoſed to be given at firſt being far beneath what it ſhould have been. The ſcheme, accordingly, did not fill, and was, therefore, altogether abandoned.

But, however well a ſcheme of this kind might ſucceed to a certain extent, it could never ſupply the ſums which government are yearly in want of; for which no method of raiſing money appears to be adequate, if it be not an aſſeſſment of income; a mode of raiſing ſupplies which appears to poſſeſs many advantages.

1. It is, perhaps, the only ſcheme of taxation that has yet been propoſed by which money can be levied with equality. Aſſeſſment of property has been

been propoſed inſtead of it; but this would not only prove unequal, but would frequently be either oppreſſive or impracticable. Property being often poſſeſſed by thoſe to whom it belongs, and not by tenants paying rent, it would always be difficult, and often impoſſible, to aſcertain the value of it. Property, to a great amount, may be poſſeſſed without being productive, as often happens with mines and houſes, and even with land, as well as with other articles; in which ſtate it could not with propriety be aſſeſſed. But the taxation of income actually received, is liable to no ſuch difficulty. It reſts entirely on this obvious and fair principle, that in ſo far as the government of a country requires and deſerves to be ſupported, the means to be employed for it ſhould be obtained with equality from the productive wealth which the country at the time may poſſeſs, and from this only: in whatever ſtate or ſituation the wealth of the kingdom may be placed, and whoever the proprietors of it may be, the productive wealth which it affords, ſhould be taxed when aſſeſſments are required. At one time our wealth may conſiſt chiefly in money and manufactures, as undoubtedly is the caſe at preſent; while, at others, it may be found almoſt entirely in the product of land. But, wherever it is, nothing can be more fair or reaſonable, than to render the whole of the national income liable for the ſupport of that government from which it receives protection.

2. While the aſſeſſment of income may thus be levied with more equality, there is alſo reaſon to believe, that much greater ſums may be obtained from it, and with leſs general offence to the community, than can probably be done from any other plan. For, while income of every kind, and in whatever way it may be obtained, would be equally liable to the effects of it, thoſe on whom it is levied would not ſo readily complain of it, as they are undoubtedly entitled to do when property is aſſeſſed without regard to equality, as very commonly is the caſe with taxes placed on articles of conſumption.

3. It may be levied with leſs expence than any other plan of taxation, carried to an equal extent, can poſſibly be; probably on a tenth part of the ſum, and with a proportional ſmall number of tax-gatherers, than are now employed in collecting aſſeſſments on articles of conſumption.

4. As a well conducted plan for the aſſeſſment of income would attach equally to the opulent and to others, which is not, nor ever can be the caſe with taxes placed on conſumption; and as this would act upon the whole wealth of the nation, a great proportion of which has never yet been aſſeſſed, it would, thereby, not only tend to reduce the expence of all our manufactures, ſo as to admit of their being carried at a more eaſy rate to foreign markets, but it would ſpeedily leſſen, in a conſiderable degree, the aſſeſſments on every other claſs of the community. There is much reaſon, indeed, to believe, in the

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preſent proſperous ſtate of this very opulent nation, that much more may be obtained from it than at firſt view it may be ſuppoſed able to produce, merely by its being made to act upon every kind of income; by which immenſe ſums would be liable to taxation, from which nothing has ever yet been obtained.

5. Aſſeſſments on income are particularly well fitted for preventing diſappointment in the ſums which government may require: for when one proportion of the national income does not prove ſufficient, it is much more eaſy to affix a larger proportion upon the whole, than to eſtabliſh a new aſſeſſment on any one article of conſumption; which ſeldom fails to excite diſcontent, and at the ſame time does not always prove productive. In another important point they would prove particularly uſeful, both to thoſe who are in the management of our public affairs, and to the community: were it eſtabliſhed that the whole ſupplies of the year ſhould be placed upon income, the miniſter, inſtead of having an annual conflict in parliament, as hitherto has always been the caſe, and likewiſe with every trade whoſe line of buſineſs might eventually fall under the operation of a new tax upon conſumption, would merely have to fix the proportion which income over the whole kingdom ought to pay. At the ſame time the nation would be relieved of all that expence with which it is now loaded in the high allowances which government is commonly obliged

to make to thoſe bankers, and money-dealers, whom they employ on every new loan.

The amount of this article of expence can ſcarcely be aſcertained; but the avidity of our monied men to ſhare in the profits which it affords, is always ſo great, that few will doubt of its being conſiderable. Not many years ago, during the misfortunes which accompanied the American war, the various advantages given to thoſe who furniſhed government with money, did not amount to leſs than ten per cent, often to much more. During all the continuance of the conteſt in which we are now engaged, although the expence has yearly been great, the allowances made to thoſe with whom government has made tranſactions, have been, as there is reaſon to imagine, conſiderably leſs: but ſtill they muſt upon the whole have been great; not, probably, leſs than five per cent, and amounting, one year with another, to one million ſterling; which, on the plan of raiſing money upon income, would have been completely and entirely ſaved: for theſe allowances are not given for the expence of management, but merely as gratuities for furniſhing the money, and which, therefore, would not be required on every individual of the nation being obliged to bring forth his ſhare yearly of the national expence.

By ſome it has been objected to this plan, that ſuch large ſums as government in the courſe of an expenſive war is often found to require, could not be obtained but through the medium of thoſe bank-

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ers and other monied men, on whom they have hitherto been accuſtomed to rely. This argument, however, is completely fallacious, and can be ſupported by thoſe only who are intereſted in the funding ſyſtem being continued; for, on the rate being eſtabliſhed which income of every kind ought to pay, it would be levied with the ſame certainty and eaſe with which payment is now obtained of every other aſſeſſment.

6. The moſt important advantage, which would enſue from a plan being carried fully into effect for raiſing all ſupplies upon income, would be, that as none would be particularly hurt by it, none would complain of it after the firſt effects of it were over. A few of the more opulent part of the nation, who, from not living up to their income, have not hitherto been fully aſſeſſed in proportion to their wealth, would alone ſpeak of it with regret; but even they would not, in equity, be entitled to do ſo; while, if the aſſeſſment ſhould not be carried farther than there is reaſon to ſuppoſe would be ſufficient even for our preſent high expences, ſcarcely any claſs of the community would feel the effects of it.

If a plan ſhall be ſteadily purſued for raiſing with equality a certain proportion of the national income, and that it may be accompliſhed there is much reaſon to believe, whatever the ſum may be which government can probably want, whether a tenth, an eighth, a ſixth, or even more, the remainder will be worth to thoſe by whom it is poſſeſſed, in pur-

chaſing labour and every neceſſary of life, juſt as much as the whole of it would have been. The effect of the meaſure would neceſſarily be to raiſe the value of money, and leſſen that of every other article, an object which, in the preſent ſtate of the nation, is of more real importance, perhaps, than any which government could with ſuch certainty and effect tend to promote. In this caſe, all our manufactures being paid with leſs money at home, thoſe by whom they are conducted would be enabled to ſell them at lower rates, and thus to retain the advantage which they poſſeſs in foreign markets, with more certainty than may be in their power, if on a return of peace and the re-eſtabliſhment of manufactures over the continent, the price of labour ſhall continue here at the extravagant height to which it has riſen. Artificers in every line, even common ſervants, ſhould be well paid; but, more than is neceſſary for their comfort, ſeldom fails to ruin both them and their families, by giving riſe to indolence and diſſipation; habits which few are ever able to conquer, and under the influence of which, principles inimical to every government are very apt to be diſſeminated.

A reduction in the price of labour would be attended with other important advantages, many of which, however eſſential they may be, can never be attained where labour is kept at a high rate: it would tend to promote more quickly that forerunner of all improvements, the formation of good roads, and

the conſtruction of thoſe vehicles of our wealth, navigable canals. It would, with great effect, encourage the improvement of land; and, by thus meliorating the ſituation of annuitants, and of all in the middle ranks of life, it would act with much certainty in giving ſtrength to government, by connecting the intereſt of that numerous and powerful claſs of the community more immediately with the ſupport of it.

It may be aſked, why ſhould this be the reſult of the taxation of income, and not of other aſſeſſments. The anſwer is obvious: a great proportion of our aſſeſſments hitherto have operated in the moſt partial manner, as all taxes on conſumption muſt neceſſarily do; ſo that even a tax on bread and other neceſſaries of life, which in this country no miniſter has ever ventured ſeriouſly to propoſe, would be very partial and oppreſſive in its operation; for while it might not even be felt by people of large incomes, it would act, as all equaliſing taxes on articles of neceſſity muſt do, with ſeverity on others of ſmall fortunes. Now the effect to which I refer, of the value of money being likely to be increaſed, and that of all the neceſſaries of life leſſened by the operation of any aſſeſſment, muſt depend entirely on its being made to apply univerſally and with full equality to the whole wealth of the nation, which appears to be, with much certainty in our power, in the taxation of income. But, that this deſirable effect may reſult from this aſſeſſment, it will require, in a particular manner, to apply to income of every kind, and

from whatever ſource it may be derived: whether from land, houſes, mines, ſhipping, merchandize, or manufactures; money in bonds, bills, or in the public funds; from profeſſional employments, or in whatever way it may be acquired: otherwiſe, if one ſet of men, namely, thoſe by whom labour is chiefly performed, ſhall be exempted, either entirely or in any conſiderable degree, while the reſt of the community are highly aſſeſſed, the very reverſe would happen. The price of labour would increaſe in a degree which it has never yet experienced, and would be productive of the moſt diſtreſsful conſequences to all ranks in ſociety; but more immediately to people of moderate incomes, in whatever line of life they might be.

One of the worſt effects ariſing from labour being too highly paid, which muſt always be the caſe when it brings more than its uſual rate when compared with the price of bread and the other neceſſaries of life, is, that the lower claſs of artificers, and workmen of every kind, being enabled to live on the produce of a ſmaller portion of their time, always withhold their exertions, and cannot be prevailed on to perform the ſame quantity of work which they readily do when their wages and the price of proviſions bear a more equal proportion to each other. There is therefore no reaſon to doubt, of the evil being to increaſe in a very alarming degree, by every operation of finance which may exempt this claſs of the community, from that ſhare of public

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aſſeſſments which they ought in equity to pay; or which by not attaching to the higher claſſes of income, in a due proportion to their extent, would enable thoſe by whom they are poſſeſſed, to pay more highly for labour than others of moderate incomes have it in their power to give. The effect of both of theſe cauſes would eventually be the ſame: labour would be increaſed by them in price, and manufacturers, as well as ſervants of every kind, be more difficult to procure.

In this view, the plan newly adopted by parliament for the aſſeſſment of income, appears to be conſiderably defective; and as the evils which it might tend to produce are ſerious and alarming, they ought, in the moſt effectual manner, to be guarded againſt, by placing all public taxes equally on all ranks, that is, in rates proportioned to their power of bearing them.

The point to which theſe obſervations relate, the national benefit likely to accrue from the price of labour being made in a conſiderable degree to depend on the price of proviſions, although highly important, has ſeldom attracted the particular attention or interference of governments: public exertion, indeed, in matters of this kind, muſt very ſeldom be neceſſary; perhaps never but in that ſtate of opulence to which Great Britain appears lately to have arrived, and in which too great a proportion of the national wealth is amaſſed by a ſmall proportion of the community, who are thereby enabled to pay

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ſuch high prices for the labour of all whom they employ as others cannot afford; by which all, in the middle ranks of ſociety, are deprived of many of thoſe comforts to which they had hitherto been accuſtomed, while no real advantage accrues even to thoſe to whom ſuch high wages are given. But although it may not often be neceſſary or proper for governments to take cognizance of matters of this kind, nor to interfere in regulating the price of labour or other commodities; yet when an evil of ſuch magnitude has taken place, all will admit that it ought with all poſſible diſpatch to be corrected, and that the ſupplies which the exigencies of the ſtate may require, ſhould never be levied in a manner that can tend in any degree to add to the magnitude of the diſtreſs.

In whatever way aſſeſſments be levied, it has hitherto been a prevailing opinion, that money placed in the national funds ſhould be exempted, as property in this ſituation has been protected from the operation of all direct aſſeſſments by various acts of parliament. This, however, ought not to be any valid objection to the meaſure, if the peace and ſecurity of the nation ſhould require it. If by the effect of an improper exemption of this kind, a great proportion of the national wealth has been placed in a ſituation which yields no advantage to government, when in danger of being ruined from this important ſource of protection being withheld, few will think or aſſert that a regulation ſo highly

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injurious to the community ſhould be continued. But it luckily happens to be much for the intereſt even of ſtockholders, that income of every kind ſhould be aſſeſſed; for, if government be not ſupported with very ample ſupplies, which now could not be done if this extenſive part of the national wealth ſhould be permitted to paſs without paying a ſhare of them, the firſt effect of the deficiency would with certainty fall upon the funds. The preſent prices of ſtock are low, but if government ſhould be reſtricted in its operations, by ſupplies being withheld from it, there is reaſon to believe, that, in no great length of time, they would fall to leſs than half of what they now bring.

There is no cauſe, however, for direct aſſeſſments being put upon money in the funds: let income be taxed, from whatever ſource it may proceed, and all ſpeculative difficulties will, on this point, be done away. For, in fact, every argument that has been ſtated againſt the aſſeſſment of property in the funds, is merely ſpeculative. None have ever ventured to ſay, that thoſe who poſſeſs incomes ariſing from the funds, ſhould be exempted from the uſual taxations on wine, ſpirits, malt, and other articles of conſumption: accordingly all our funds have hitherto been virtually taxed in this manner; and, perhaps, in a much greater degree than would have been required if a direct aſſeſſment had been placed on them.

In every inveſtigation that has taken place of the important

important ſubject of our preſent inquiry, the taxation of income, the chief objection to which it has appeared to be liable, is the difficulty of carrying any ſcheme for this purpoſe into effect, without the riſk of diſcloſing the circumſtances of thoſe that are aſſeſſed.

Were this even to be the general effect of it, there is ſome reaſon to think that no public harm would reſult from it: nay, it might, eventually, anſwer a good purpoſe, by ſerving to detect the wild ſpeculations of thoſe, who, without funds of their own, enter raſhly on extenſive ſchemes of trade and manufactures, altogether on credit, and thereby give riſe to many calamitous bankruptcies, which otherwiſe would not happen. In this manner it would afford the moſt eſſential ſupport to fair traders, while thoſe only would ſuffer by its operation who might do harm to others by continuing to do buſineſs longer.

But aſſeſſments may be raiſed on income, without divulging the circumſtances of thoſe on whom they are placed, and at the ſame time be fully equal to the views which it has been the object of theſe obſervations chiefly to inculcate, that of every ſcheme of public taxation being made to act upon wealth, wherever it may be placed. The plan which parliament has lately thought fit to adopt, for raiſing a tax upon income, may, perhaps, on trial, be found to anſwer the purpoſe; for no important meaſure, ſo extenſive in its application as this muſt be,

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can be fairly judged of by any other teſt than that of experience. But, at firſt view, it appears to be liable to ſome material objections.

To oblige men to ſet forth their incomes for the purpoſe of being aſſeſſed, is not only impoſing a diſagreeable taſk on all who may be liable to the operation of the ſcheme; but by appointing every man to act the part of an aſſeſſor on himſelf, while powers are given to others to contradict what he may aſſert, conſequences of an unpleaſant kind will be apt to ſucceed, which, on a different plan, might be prevented. This inconvenience might be guarded againſt, and, perhaps, all the advantages of the ſcheme retained, were this part of it to be reverſed, by appointing aſſeſſors to affix the ſums which individuals ſhould pay, inſtead of obliging thoſe who are aſſeſſed to appear in it for any other purpoſe than that of adducing evidence of their being overcharged when this ſhould be the caſe.

The commiſſioners for carrying the act into effect are not ſufficiently numerous: inſtead of being choſen for counties or large diſtricts, they ſhould be parochial; otherwiſe the wealth of very conſiderable numbers will not be aſcertained. In a great proportion of caſes the incomes of pariſhioners are well known to each other, or with no great trouble of inquiry a knowledge of them may be obtained. But this requires and implies, ſuch a local acquaintance with circumſtances as cannot be ſuppoſed to take place with regard to large diſtricts.

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With the view of obviating these and other objections, to which the scheme appears to be liable, various regulations will probably from time to time be both proposed and adopted. But if a plan could be devised, which on its onset would be more likely to answer the purpose, a good deal of inconvenience, and perhaps also considerable loss, might be guarded against, by adopting it at once. In some circumstances the following outlines of a plan for this purpose may be found to merit attention. At least, the principles on which it is meant to act will probably be approved of, as they are not only fair and equitable, and likely to answer the expectations of government, but they have already, although on a smaller scale, been found to succeed, after a long course of experience.

1. Let the inhabitants of every parish be divided into classes; each class to consist of the following orders of the people who reside in it; namely, landholders, farmers, proprietors of houses and mines, merchants, bankers, manufacturers, annuitants of every kind, whether clergymen, officers in the army and navy, or others, and those who live upon income from money, wherever it may be placed.

2. Let assessors be appointed from each of these classes, in proportion to the numbers of which they consist; one assessor for each class, when it does not exceed two hundred; two assessors for each class consisting of any number between two hundred and

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five hundred; with a proportional number of aſſeſſors for all additional numbers.

3. Theſe aſſeſſors not to be appointed by government, but to be the fair repreſentatives of the claſſes to which they belong, and elected by them; by which much diſcontent would be prevented, that otherwiſe might take place. It may alſo, with this view, prove an uſeful regulation to change one, perhaps two, of the whole number of aſſeſſors of each pariſh yearly.

4. Let it be fixed by act of parliament what the aſſeſſment on property for the year is to be; whether an eighth, tenth, ſixteenth, or whatever the exigencies of the ſtate may require; with a reference to theſe parochial commiſſioners or aſſeſſors, who would very commonly affix with much accuracy and equality what every individual in their ſeveral pariſhes ſhould pay: As they would in general be the moſt reſpectable people of every pariſh, and poſſeſſed, as men of this kind commonly are, of all the local knowledge of their diſtricts, with full time to proſecute inquiries for the purpoſe, where the fortunes of individuals might be uncertain, few inſtances would occur of their being wrong.

The income of all profeſſional men, of thoſe whoſe wealth conſiſts in land or money, of manufacturers, and even the profits of traders, would, in almoſt every inſtance, be eaſily known by commiſſioners choſen by themſelves, and reſiding in the diſtrict: but, as it might frequently be difficult to aſcertain

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the profits of farmers, who ſeldom judge it neceſſary to keep their accounts with accuracy, and whoſe expences generally remain more fixed and ſtationary than thoſe of other claſſes of men; inſtead of levying a ſhare of the profits of farming, a poundage might be placed upon the whole rental of the nation, and be made to apply to farms of every ſize and in every ſituation; for, if thoſe of extenſive rents are aſſeſſed, the very ſmalleſt in the kingdom ſhould be taxed in the ſame proportion; otherwiſe thoſe by whom they are poſſeſſed would be enabled to ſell, even in the ſame market, every article of their produce at a lower rate than others could do by whom this high aſſeſſment on income ſhould be paid. When it might be meant to levy a tenth part of the income of the reſt of the nation, it might be left with the parochial aſſeſſors to levy from three-pence to two ſhillings in the pound on farmers; for while, in ſome ſituations, the profits of farmers may be ſuch as to admit of their paying two ſhillings, an exact tenth, in others, even in the ſame pariſh, an eighth part of this might be all that they could afford.

Placing aſſeſſments on farmers according to the amount of their rent, is a plan that will not probably anſwer; for while ſome, from being low rented, might be ſufficiently able to pay them, others, even of the ſame extent of rent, might find it impoſſible. Some farms, even of extenſive rents, inſtead of yielding profit, are, from various cauſes, attended with great loſs yearly during the whole duration of the

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leaſes on which they are held; and others, in order to become ultimately productive, require not only all their produce in the mean time to be employed in their improvement, but large additional ſums likewiſe. To levy a high tax, or indeed any aſſeſſment whatever, on farms in this ſituation, whether in the occupation of farmers or proprietors, is moſt aſſuredly improper. It muſt not only operate in the moſt powerful manner againſt the improvement of land, and would thus be productive of very diſtreſsful conſequences to the whole nation; but to thoſe individuals, who, in ſuch circumſtances, ſhould be forced to pay aſſeſſments, it would be an act of the greateſt inequality and injuſtice: for, while the clear income only would be taxed of every other claſs of the community, farmers would be charged on an article productive of great loſs. As well might merchants be aſſeſſed on the number and magnitude of the ſhips which they employ, and not on the income which they derive from them. Nor will the agricultural part of the nation be fairly or properly dealt with, if their proportion of the tax now to be raiſed upon income, be not levied on their clear revenue only, and not on that vague index of their wealth, the amount of rents.

A more uncertain mode could not perhaps have been fixed on for obtaining a knowledge of the profits of farming than the height of rents; for the profits of farms depend on various cauſes, altogether independent of rent, and totally unconnected with

the real value of the grounds. In a great meaſure they depend on the ſkill of the individuals by whom they are poſſeſſed. Much depends on the amount of the capitals employed in them, and a great deal on local circumſtances, ſuch as their contiguity to markets, manures, coal, and timber, the price of labour, and the ſtate of the contiguous roads. To tax farmers, therefore, on the amount of their rents, when their incomes depend on a great variety and combination of other cauſes, as it is a meaſure that has probably been adopted haſtily, without adverting to the effects of it, ſo there is reaſon to hope, that this part of the plan for raiſing our future ſupplies upon income, will be altered with all poſſible diſpatch. Landholders are more eſpecially intereſted in this alteration; for if it do not take place, the whole amount of the aſſeſſment will ſpeedily fall upon them, and not upon farmers. A moderate tax would every where be cheerfully paid by farmers, were it to be levied with a due regard to equality of income; but, if this be not kept in view, and if aſſeſſments are to be raiſed on them whether they derive profit or incur loſs by their poſſeſſions, they will in the firſt place deſiſt from all farther improvements, and afterwards remove with their capitals, either to ſome other country, or to other profeſſions at home, which government ſhall judge to be more worthy of their protection.

The moſt effectual method of guarding againſt ſuch a fatal occurrence, and of raiſing a reaſonable

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aſſeſſment on farmers, as well as on proprietors who occupy their own grounds, would be, to put it in the power of the commiſſioners or aſſeſſors, to levy a certain proportion of their clear income, either by a poundage in the manner that I have propoſed, or in any other that may be judged better; but in no inſtance to charge them with taxes merely in proportion to their rents, and where no profits have been made. If this part of the income act be not immediately altered, ſuch a check will be given to agricultural improvements, as they never before experienced, and from the influence of which they may never perhaps recover. It certainly was not meant to be attended with this effect; but as it now ſtands, the moſt ruinous conſequences would enſue from it: it would put an immediate ſtop to the moſt important branch of agriculture, the improvement of thoſe grounds, which hitherto, from a deficiency of funds, and from the great expence with which operations of this kind are attended, have in a great part of the kingdom been allowed to remain in a ſtate of nature. For a long time paſt it has been doubtful, whether the improvement of grounds in this ſituation can be carried on with any proſpect of advantage to proprietors or not; owing to the great increaſe that has taken place in the price of labour, and the higher returns obtained from money veſted in manufactures, as will be more fully explained hereafter. The effect of the income act, as it now ſtands, would be to remove every doubt:

were it not to be altered, all ſuch parts of the national wealth as have hitherto been employed in the improvement of land, particularly of waſte grounds, would be immediately withdrawn, and veſted in more productive purſuits.

In this part of the act a partial alteration has taken place, for which no reaſon has been aſſigned. Farmers in Scotland are to be charged upon their incomes in the ſame manner with other people; while, in England and Wales, they are to pay according to the amount of their rents, whether they derive profit or loſs from their poſſeſſions; as all proprietors of land are likewiſe to do for ſuch parts of their grounds as they may wiſh to occupy, whether for the purpoſe of improving them, or with any other view. As the whole of this muſt have ariſen from miſtake, either from its being haſtily done, or from want of communication with country gentlemen and reputable farmers, who alone ſhould be referred to for this kind of information, it can require only to be again looked over and conſidered, to ſhew the neceſſity of the alteration to which theſe obſervations relate. If the alteration was right with regard to Scotland, it muſt neceſſarily be ſo for every part of the realm; to the whole of which it ſhould be made to apply, and to have in view equally the incomes ariſing from lands whether occupied by farmers or proprietors.

5. With the view of preventing thoſe inconveniences which might ariſe from error on the part of the

the aſſeſſors, thoſe who may ſuſpect that they are overcharged, ſhould be entitled to redreſs, on ſufficient evidence being adduced by them of the facts which the aſſeſſors chooſe to have ſet forth for their information, and for the expreſs purpoſe of proving that their aſſeſſments ſhould be reduced.

6. Appeals ſhould be permitted from the deciſions of the parochial aſſeſſors: with which view, five commiſſioners ſhould be appointed for each county, each of whom ſhould poſſeſs at leaſt three hundred pounds ſterling of clear income in the county; and their deciſions ſhould be final.

7. In order to prevent concealment of property, or miſtatement of facts, a forfeiture ſhould be incurred of all property and ſums of money which individuals might endeavour to conceal; and if this ſhould be made to apply to all ſuch attempts, and to take place at any future period when a diſcovery thereof ſhould happen to be made, little or no wealth would be concealed.

8. If it ſhall be judged proper entirely to conceal the ſums with which individuals may be aſſeſſed, as well as the reſult of thoſe particular inquiries which it would, in ſome inſtances, be neceſſary to make into the extent of income, it may be eaſily done, by affixing a conſiderable fine; to the extent, ſuppoſe, of a thouſand pounds to every diſcovery; and obliging all the aſſeſſors of every pariſh, as well as the clerk and collector whom they employ, to take an oath of ſecrecy: ſo that, as both infamy and loſs

would attach to every breach of their engagement, few or none would ever be heard of.

By these and other regulations, which a sufficient trial of the scheme would suggest, every objection, to which it may appear to be liable, would be easily done away. Nor is it on theory or speculation that this observation is founded: with some variety and improvements, it is nearly the same with that which has long been preferred in Holland as the most equal, least expensive, and most efficient method of raising money. And, although not known in England, a very considerable tax has long been levied in almost every town in Scotland, under the denomination of what is there termed Stent; almost precisely on the principles which I have thus ventured to suggest.

Assessors, or stent-masters, as they are termed in Scotland, are elected yearly, one from every trade, with powers to levy a certain sum upon the community; which they do by a charge on every individual, according to what they believe to be a certain proportion of his clear income. And with such equality is it done, that although every person is entitled to apply for redress who thinks that he is overcharged, and although the sum raised in this manner is considerable, many being charged yearly to the extent of ten, fifteen, or even twenty pounds sterling, yet few complaints are ever preferred against it. Only one instance has occurred of this tax being complained of in the city of Edinburgh for thirty years past;

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and, even in that caſe, the perſon who adduced the complaint did not think proper to proceed with it.

The taxation of income, therefore, ſeems not only to poſſeſs many important advantages over every other plan of raiſing money that has yet been propoſed, but may be eaſily carried into effect, without the riſk of the income of individuals being diſcloſed, and with ſcarcely a poſſibility of its being evaded.

But that this, or any ſimilar ſcheme, may anſwer the purpoſe of raiſing large ſupplies, it ſhould not only be made to affect, as has been already obſerved, property of every kind, but revenues of much ſmaller amount than thoſe which the act of parliament, lately paſſed for the taxation of income, appears to have in view. By exempting entirely all incomes under ſixty pounds, a very conſiderable part of the national wealth will yield nothing; while, there is much reaſon to believe, that no claſs in the community can ſo eaſily afford a moderate rate of aſſeſſment as thoſe by whom incomes of this kind are poſſeſſed.

Till of late it appeared to be improper to place any farther aſſeſſment on people in the lower ſtations of life. But what at one time may be expedient, at another may be quite the reverſe. In the courſe even of theſe laſt two years, the ſituation of manufacturers and labourers, in the poſſeſſion of incomes below ſixty pounds a year, has been greatly meliorated, by their wages having riſen in a proportion far above that of the neceſſaries of life; ſo that,

although incomes of this extent ought not to be highly taxed, they ought ſurely to be ſo in a certain proportion.

Independent of other reaſons for the income of people in this ſituation being aſſeſſed, there is one which ſhews it to be even for their intereſt that it ſhould be ſo. If their property be not directly taxed in this manner, aſſeſſments will neceſſarily fall on them in ſome other, and probably with more diſtreſs and expence, as lately was the caſe in the high additional duty laid upon ſalt. So that, in this view, it would not be complained of, even by the lower claſſes of labouring people; who would however ſubmit to it the more readily, were they to ſee that larger incomes were aſſeſſed proportionally to their amount, and on a ſimilar ſcale of gradation with their own. They muſt know that people of high income can afford to pay more in proportion than thoſe of leſs wealth; and, as they muſt likewiſe know, that a much larger aſſeſſment might be obtained from the opulent, merely by making them liable to the operation of the ſame principle of taxation, they would be induced to conceive, were this to take place, that the whole ſcheme was more equitable and juſt in its application than otherwiſe they may probably be.

No ſufficient reaſon has ever been offered why people of large income are not to be aſſeſſed in different degrees proportioned to their amount, while all ſmall incomes, from ſixty to two hundred pounds, are meant to be taxed in this manner. If incomes

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of two hundred pounds are aſſeſſed to the extent of a tenth part, while thoſe of ſixty pounds pay only a hundred and twentieth part of their amount, and all intermediate ſums proportionally leſs than the firſt of theſe ſums do, thoſe by whom they are poſſeſſed will ſee no good cauſe for the ſame ſcale of gradation not going farther. It might apply, perhaps, even with more propriety to large than to ſmall incomes; in ſo far as the latter may, in general, be ſuppoſed to be little more than equal to the amount of the common neceſſaries of life; an obſervation which becomes leſs applicable to incomes of the higher orders, in degrees proportioned to their amount.

With the view, therefore, of giving farther effect to the plan, and ſatisfaction to thoſe in the lower and middle ranks of life, an object of much importance in every meaſure of taxation, gradations of aſſeſſment ſhould take place on all high incomes, from whatever ſource they may proceed. It may, perhaps, be judged reaſonable, to allow the ſame rate of taxation; for example, a tenth, if that ſhall ſeem to be ſufficient, to apply to all incomes from two hundred pounds to thoſe of a thouſand, or even to ſuch as amount to fifteen hundred pounds; for the fact is undoubted, that all other aſſeſſments are paid in a greater proportion, and are therefore more ſeverely felt by people of this extent of income, more eſpecially by thoſe whoſe revenues run from five to ſeven and eight hundred pounds, than uſually is the caſe either with fortunes of large amount, or

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with thoſe of much ſmaller extent. But, when it is agreed on, that incomes from two hundred pounds to fifteen hundred are to be taxed a tenth, by an eaſy gradation, the more wealthy ſhould pay a ninth, a ninth and half; an eighth, an eighth and half; and ſo on, till thoſe in the higheſt claſs ſhould pay a fifth, a fourth, or perhaps even a third; which ſome came handſomely forward and paid in their voluntary ſubſcriptions of laſt year; ſome for a ſingle year only, but others with the promiſe of giving an equal ſum yearly during the war. So that what ſome have thus generouſly and freely done, ought not to be conſidered by others, in equal opulence, as improper. Nay, in common juſtice to thoſe who thus came freely forward, when their country was in danger, an aſſeſſment to this amount ſhould be placed upon all who did not.

On this, or ſome other plan upon ſimilar principles, a ſum may be yearly levied from the income of Great Britain, ſufficient, as there is reaſon to believe, not merely for carrying on the war, but for every other purpoſe for which it can be required. But, that the ſum to be procured by it may be full and efficient, the plan muſt be made to apply, as I have already repeatedly obſerved, and which cannot be too much kept in view, to every kind, and almoſt to every degree, of income.

By the act of parliament recently paſſed for the taxation of income, various exemptions are, indeed, done away, which were found to do harm in levying the

the aſſeſſed taxes of laſt year. Still, however, too many appear in it; and, if none in the lower claſſes of ſociety are to be aſſeſſed in any degree, nor thoſe in the higheſt or moſt wealthy claſſes in proportion to their incomes, the amount will probably fall far ſhort of the ſum that is wanted. It becomes, therefore, a moſt important object to have this kept ſtrictly in view, and that no argument ſhould be allowed to have influence in ſetting a meaſure of ſuch moment aſide, till the plan itſelf has been fairly put to the teſt of experience. The very life and ſpirit of the ſcheme depends on income of every kind being equally aſſeſſed. So that, if the moſt conſiderable part of the nation, in point of number, together with the moſt wealthy, ſhall either be entirely exempted, or not ſufficiently taxed, it will neceſſarily fail from the firſt outſet. Whereas, if a well-digeſted plan be eſtabliſhed, by which every claſs in ſociety ſhall be taxed on fair and equal principles, and no improper exemptions permitted, it will not only anſwer the purpoſe of giving full ſecurity to the nation, by making it known to all, that our reſources are inexhauſtible; but no part of the community will have reaſon to complain of it.

I would not even admit of exemptions on account of children. Perſons poſſeſſed of large incomes do not require it; while manufacturers and others in the inferior ranks of ſociety are now relieved of the expence ariſing from children by the wages which they are, even at an early period of life, enabled to

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gain. With the ſame propriety people might expect to be exempted from duties on ſalt, ſoap, ale, and wine; for it ought always to be kept in view, and be ſtrongly inculcated, that the taxation of income is inſtead of farther aſſeſſments on theſe and other articles of conſumption; and therefore, that, in order to render it efficient, it ſhould be made to apply in the ſame manner.

People in the lower claſſes of life are not commonly more unreaſonable than others. If they are taxed, by this or any other plan, above what they can bear, they will neceſſarily complain; and their complaints ought to be heard. They would, more eſpecially, have good cauſe to complain, if they ſhould ſee that people of large fortunes did not pay in proportion to the amount of them. But if they ſhould find that, while a perſon of twenty pounds of income does not pay more than a fortieth part of it, others of large fortune are obliged to contribute a third or fourth part of their extenſive revenues; inſtead of complaining, they would applaud and ſupport a plan from which they would perceive that very important advantages would accrue to the whole nation; and, in the operation of which, that the moſt complete juſtice would be done to perſons in every condition, and to whatever extent their incomes might amount.

There is no reaſon, therefore, to be afraid of oppoſition, from people of ſmall incomes, to any plan of finance that may be founded on theſe principles.

And, although a few, poſſeſſed of great fortunes, may at firſt complain of their aſſeſſments, they will ſoon probably find, when the operation of the plan takes effect in all its parts, particularly from its influence in reducing the price of labour and all the neceſſaries of life, that even they and their families will ultimately be relieved by it.

I cannot, however, bring this part of our ſubject to a concluſion without remarking, that, although all income ſhould be aſſeſſed in proportion to its amount, yet, in fixing the proportions, it would be fair and proper that the nature of the funds ſhould be kept in view from whence incomes ariſe; ſo that the rate to be levied upon each might in ſome meaſure depend on the permanency of the ſource from which they proceed. Thus, if it be judged proper to levy a tenth of all the income of the nation ariſing from permanent funds; ſuch as land, houſes, mines, and money realiſed on mortgage or in any other manner; income of the ſame extent ariſing from the daily exertion of individuals in their various profeſſions, as being more uncertain, ought not perhaps to pay more than a fifteenth.

Some deduction ſhould likewiſe be made to annuitants, who ought not to pay ſo much as is levied on income ariſing from permanent funds; although, in equity, they ſhould pay more than profeſſional men, whoſe incomes are not only more uncertain than annuities commonly are, but require the perſonal attendance and labour of thoſe by whom they

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are poſſeſſed; a conſideration of the moſt ſerious importance in fixing the difference of aſſeſſments on the income of profeſſional men, when compared with thoſe ariſing from permanent property: thus, while clergymen, officers in the navy and army who have retired from duty, and other annuitants of moderate incomes, may be able to pay ſmall aſſeſſments, it would be unreaſonable, and therefore improper, to make them liable in equal payments with thoſe whoſe monied or landed properties yield a regular intereſt yearly of the ſame amount, without the capital being encroached on. And ſtill more does it appear to be improper, that a farmer, giving his perſonal attention and care, ſhould pay equally with the proprietor; or that the uncertain income of a merchant, lawyer, or any other profeſſional man, whoſe wealth depends upon his daily exertions, and whoſe family may be leſt perhaps in poverty at his death, ſhould be equally taxed with thoſe whoſe money in the funds, or on bonds completely ſecured, yield them regular incomes of a ſimilar amount, while the capitals from whence theſe incomes proceed remain equally valuable as before.

We have now to conſider the probable amount of the national income, with a view to this or any other aſſeſſment with which it may hereafter be charged.

In this it is obvious that much uncertainty muſt prevail, from that deficiency of data which for a conſiderable time we muſt labour under. Nor does

it appear that this can be avoided till the operation of the tax which we are now conſidering has been carried fully into effect; for which a period of two or more years will be required, together with ſuch amendments as time and experience will point out in the ſcheme newly adopted by parliament for laying it on.

The calculation made by Mr. Pitt of the amount of the yearly revenue of Great Britain is, that it extends to one hundred and two millions, after deducting a fifth from the rents of land, and other articles, for the exemption of thoſe whoſe incomes do not extend to ſixty pounds. There is much reaſon, however, to hope, that on trial, it will be found greatly to exceed this. The miniſter himſelf, indeed, ſeems to think that it will do ſo; although he is certainly right, till the fact is aſcertained, in making full allowance for all ſuch deficiencies as there is reaſon to ſuppoſe may take place.

For ſeveral years paſt, a portion of my time has occaſionally been occupied with inquiries of this kind; from all of which I have been induced to believe, that the aggregate of our national income will be found conſiderably to exceed two hundred millions. The data, indeed, on which this calculation is founded, are neither ſo full nor ſatisfactory as I could wiſh them to be. Nor is it poſſible, in a publication of this extent, to give them, even as they are, in that full detail which the importance of the ſubject may appear to require. I ſhall therefore at

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preſent only mention, generally, the reſult of theſe inquiries, leaving it to time and farther obſervation to ſhew whether they are well founded or not.

The rental of landed property in England is eſtimated by Mr. Pitt at twenty millions; and for Scotland at five millions; after deducting a fifth for the purpoſe which has already been ſtated; the whole, including this fifth, amounting therefore to thirty millions.

The reſult of my inveſtigation, however, leads me firmly to believe, that it exceeds this by one third, and extends therefore to forty millions. Upwards of a hundred years ago, it was eſtimated, by the beſt calculators of the times, at fourteen millions; and few will doubt of its being now more than treble of whatever the amount of it at that time may have been; particularly as Scotland, and a great part of the north of England, were then of ſuch trifling value as ſcarcely to be taken into the account, although now improved to a great extent. In ſome of the rich provinces of the ſouth, in which cultivation took place more early, rents have not riſen in this proportion; but there is much reaſon to believe, that in the nation at large, they have done ſo.

As an additional proof, however, of this eſtimate of the rents of land being near the truth, it will, on farther inveſtigation, I believe, be found, that the land-tax, inſtead of amounting to two ſhillings in the pound, as ſome have ſuppoſed is the caſe, does not exceed one ſhilling; I rather think that it is ſomewhat leſs. In ſome parts, indeed, of the kingdom

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it runs from three ſhillings to nearly four, even on the actual rent. But, in a great proportion of the whole, it does not amount to one ſhilling and ſixpence; while in ſome extenſive diſtricts, particularly in many parts of Northumberland, Yorkſhire, Weſtmoreland, Cumberland, and a great part of Scotland, it does not exceed fourpence. Nay, many do not pay more than twopence. By which the average of the whole is ſo much reduced, that it will not probably be found to exceed the ſum that I have mentioned. On this conſideration, therefore, as well as others, which cannot in this place be enumerated, I have no heſitation in ſaying, that the land-income of Great Britain is not leſs than forty millions.

The authority of Mr. Arthur Young, the celebrated improver and author, who, at the time when he wrote, believed that the land-tax amounted to about two ſhillings in the pound, would have deſerved more conſideration if he had written lately. But, as twenty-five years have elapſed ſince Mr. Young's work on this ſubject was publiſhed; during which period the rents of land have greatly increaſed, often to more than double their former amount; however correct his opinion upon this point may, at that period, have been, it cannot be conſidered as applicable to circumſtances as they exiſt at preſent. Beſides, Mr. Young's inquiries having chiefly taken place in the beſt cultivated parts of the iſland, where the land-tax in general is high, there is reaſon to ſuppoſe that this circumſtance alone might be the

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cauſe of his average of the whole being conſiderably above what it otherwiſe would have been.

The profits of farming are the next article of income that we ſhall notice.

By theſe are meant the gain which remains to farmers, after paying their rents and expences of management; generally ſuppoſed to be equal to the ſums which they pay to the proprietors. In ſome ſituations, the profits of farmers are conſiderably more than this; but, in others, they are ſo much leſs, that if five millions are deducted, being an eighth part of the whole, the remainder will probably be near the truth. Thirty-five millions will, therefore, be the amount of this part of our income.

The amount of tythes will not probably be leſs than five millions five hundred thouſand pounds. Income from money in the funds, about fifteen millions five hundred thouſand pounds. From money on bonds and bills, including the capitals employed in banks over the whole nation, ſix millions. From the rents of houſes, ſix millions five hundred thouſand pounds. The income of profeſſional men, two millions five hundred thouſand pounds. From canals, fiſheries on the ſea coaſts, and the produce of mines of every deſcription, including thoſe of coal, lead, and copper, five millions. Profits ariſing from Eaſt and Weſt India poſſeſſions, and from property in other countries, belonging to perſons who live and ſpend their fortunes in Great Britain,

five

five millions. And, as this includes the income of Iriſh proprietors reſiding in this country, which of itſelf has commonly been rated at more than a million a year, it will not probably be conſidered as highly ſtated.

The profits of the whole retail trade of the nation, five millions. From the capital employed in foreign trade, twelve millions. And from that very productive ſource of national wealth, the capitals employed in domeſtic trade, and profits of ſkill and induſtry, twenty-eight millions.

Having no data for eſtimating the laſt four articles, equal to thoſe which Mr. Pitt muſt poſſeſs, the ſums which I have affixed to them are taken from his account of their probable extent. And as all Mr. Pitt's eſtimates of the other parts of our income appear to be low, there is reaſon to ſuppoſe that theſe may be ſo likewiſe.

To theſe various ſums we have ſtill a very important one to add, which Mr. Pitt has not thought proper to ſtate; but which, there is reaſon to believe, may with as much certainty be depended upon as any of the others. I mean the incomes of artificers and others not depending upon capitals: ſuch as are paid ſolely for ingenuity and labour to thoſe in the inferior claſſes of life, in like manner with the fees and other payments of profeſſional men in the higher ranks of ſociety.

As all incomes of ſixty pounds and upwards are

ſuppoſed to be included in one or other of the foregoing ſtatements, thoſe only remain to be comprehended in this which do not amount to ſixty pounds, but yet of ſufficient importance to admit of being aſſeſſed for the ſupport of government. Sixty pounds, indeed, are fixed by the act of parliament lately paſſed for the taxation of income, as the loweſt on which any aſſeſſment ſhall be placed. But, for the reaſons which I have already ſuggeſted, as well as others not neceſſary to enumerate, there is much cauſe to imagine that conſiderable advantage would ariſe from its being carried lower; not merely becauſe the ſum which it would raiſe would be conſiderable, but from the influence which it would have on a point ſtill more eſſential, to which I have already had occaſion to advert, and to which the attention of government cannot be too much directed; I mean the raiſing the value of money, and leſſening that of labour.

The ſum which it would produce, would indeed be very conſiderable, owing to the number being great on whom it would operate. For, although it might not at firſt be expedient to make it affect the very loweſt claſs of incomes; yet that claſs of the community whoſe income, although low, is ſuch as to admit of a ſmall taxation, is very numerous, and would therefore yield an extenſive revenue; even on ſuch ſmall rates being levied upon each as with perfect eaſe they can afford. It

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may ultimately, perhaps, appear to be the moſt equitable, and therefore the beſt plan, to levy a moderate tax on the income of all who do not in one form or another live upon public charity; nor would it be conſidered as improper, even by thoſe who poſſeſs theſe ſmall incomes, were it not to be carried farther than hitherto taxes have proportionally been on articles of conſumption; but at preſent we will ſuppoſe that fifteen pounds of clear income is the loweſt to which the aſſeſſment will be made to apply; ſo that the claſs will include all incomes from fifteen to ſixty pounds.

It will be conceived, however, that the numbers in this, or any other claſs in ſociety, cannot be aſcertained with preciſion. But I think it probable, that the claſs to which I allude does not amount to leſs than two millions. And my reaſons for this opinion are theſe.

The population of Great Britain is not accurately known. But, from the beſt and lateſt accounts of it which we poſſeſs, few will doubt of its amounting to ten millions. Some believe it to be conſiderably more than this. Others think that it is leſs. But we ſhall take it at ten millions; believing this to be not far from the truth.

Let this number be divided into twentieths; each containing half a million; let three of theſe parts be allowed for people rendered unfit for work, by age; and four, for children; one part

for men employed in the army and navy; one for the poor, including thoſe received into hoſpitals, and others living on charity; and five parts for thoſe whoſe yearly incomes do not amount to fifteen pounds; allowances for each of theſe claſſes, probably rather above than below the truth; ſtill the remainder, being three millions, will leave two millions, for people of that claſs whoſe incomes are ſuppoſed to run from fifteen pounds to ſixty. For, the numbers in all the higher and middle ranks of ſociety, by whom the chief expences of government are paid, are ſmall, when compared with thoſe immediately below them. Even in this country, this neceſſarily takes place to a certain extent; but not in any degree equal to what happens in others: in almoſt every other kingdom of Europe, there is not ſuppoſed to be above one in two hundred whoſe yearly income exceeds twenty pounds. While in Great Britain, there is reaſon to believe, that one in ten have incomes of not leſs than ſixty pounds; conſtituting a difference in favour of the internal ſtrength of this country, and of the permanency of that conſtitution from which ſuch advantages have ariſen that it is not poſſible to calculate; particularly as even thoſe who form the more inferior ranks in Great Britain, live in complete ſecurity and eaſe; with full leiſure to contemplate the dreadful miſeries which have fallen upon all the nations that ſurround them, from the unwarrant-

able conduct of one of their number; which, giving way to ſpeculative deluſions on governments, firſt overturned their own, and then employed its armies in attempting to do the ſame to others. Not for the purpoſe, as in real mockery they hold out, of giving relief to the people of thoſe countries which they invade; but with the expreſs intention, as every inhabitant of this very favoured iſland knows, of living on the plunder of their effects; reducing them and their children, rich and poor indiſcriminately, to a ſtate of ſlavery; and taking full poſſeſſion of their domains.

Leaving, however, this ſhort digreſſion, for which the intereſting nature of the ſubject can alone be given as an apology, we ſhall now proceed to complete the ſtatement of the national income.

The number of that claſs of the community whoſe income runs from fifteen to ſixty pounds, I have already endeavoured to ſhew is about two millions. And, as in this claſs are included not only all farmers whoſe rents run between theſe two ſums, but all manufacturers whoſe wages are not ſo high as to raiſe them above ſixty pounds a year, nor ſo low as to be leſs than fifteen; and, as the emoluments of this claſs of men, I mean manufacturers generally employed over the whole country, are now very great, being commonly believed to run from half a-crown to three ſhillings per day, or upwards of fifty pounds per annum, the general

average of the whole claſs, making allowance for thoſe employed at wages of ſmaller extent, might, with perfect propriety, be ſtated at forty pounds. But I ſhall take it only at thirty-five. Even on this low calculation, which I believe to be conſiderably beneath the truth, an increaſe would ariſe from this claſs alone, who are equally capable of paying a moderate aſſeſſment as any other claſs of the community, of ſeventy millions, to the general revenue.

The reaſons for laying a proportional tax on this claſs of citizens, have already been ſtated, namely, that it would add a very conſiderable ſum to the annual revenue of the kingdom, without proving oppreſſive to thoſe by whom it is paid; that in equity and juſtice to the reſt of the nation, they ought to pay this aſſeſſment in lieu of thoſe taxes which muſt have been placed on articles of conſumption, if this had not been reſolved on, and of which they would have paid their ſhares, as hitherto they have done; and, laſtly, that it would tend with more certainty than any other means, to leſſen the price of labour and raiſe the value of money. But, in oppoſition to all theſe, it is ſaid, that it would be difficult, and often impoſſible, to collect, and therefore that it is better not to make the attempt.

On the plan adopted by act of parliament for collecting the tax on income, it would indeed be

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difficult to render this part of it efficient: a few commiſſioners, acting for the extenſive diſtricts of a large county, would be unequal to this part of their taſk, as there is reaſon to ſuſpect they will be for other parts of it alſo, if thoſe whom they employ as aſſeſſors and collectors under them be not entruſted with more power than in any inſtance they ought to have. But, if parochial aſſeſſors were appointed, either on the plan which I have ventured to propoſe, or on any other that may be judged better, every difficulty of this kind would vaniſh; and, while it would be done with eaſe to the aſſeſſors and their collectors, ſcarcely any part of the national income would eſcape; while there is reaſon to fear, that much of it, in all ranks of ſociety, will paſs without being known, if the preſent plan of laying on the aſſeſſment is purſued. If parochial aſſeſſors ſhall be appointed, with powers to affix the ſums in the firſt inſtance that individuals ſhould pay, inſtead of obliging every man to act as aſſeſſor on himſelf, it would not only prove greatly more productive, but, in every reſpect, would give more general ſatisfaction: if county commiſſioners, however, are to be continued, no harm can reſult from the attempt being made, nor from their endeavouring to raiſe aſſeſſments on all varieties of income.

By the ſtatement which I have given of our national income, it appears in one view as follows.

Rents of land - - - - - - - - -	£. 40,000,000
Profits of farming - - - - - - - -	35,000,000
Amount of tythes - - - - - - - - -	5,500,000
Income from money in the public funds -	15,500,000
From money in bonds and bills, including capitals in banks - - - - - - - -	6,000,000
From rents of houſes - - - - - - - -	6,500,000
Income of profeſſional men - - - - - -	2,500,000
From canals, mines, and fiſheries - - -	5,000,000
Incomes ſpent in Britain, ariſing from properties in other countries - - - -	5,000,000
From the retail trade over the nation - -	5,000,000
From the capital employed in foreign trade	12,000,000
From the capital employed in domeſtic trade	28,000,000
Incomes of farmers, manufacturers, and others, from fifteen to ſixty pounds a year	70,000,000
	£. 236,000,000

This ſurpriſing extent of wealth being greatly more than the yearly income of Britain has ever been ſuppoſed to amount to, the accuracy of the calculation will neceſſarily be called in queſtion. In a matter of ſuch magnitude, accuracy is not to be attained. But great as this ſtatement of the national income is, if it ſhould ultimately prove to be wrong, I have much reaſon to think that the error will be found to conſiſt in its being rather conſiderably below, than above the truth.—In the moſt doubtful parts of the eſtimate, I have adhered, as I have already obſerved, to the calculations of Mr. Pitt, whoſe information, in all that relates to the foreign as well as domeſtic trade of the nation,

nation, muſt probably be the beſt that can be obtained, and I have given reaſons which there is good cauſe to believe are well founded, for conſidering the income from land to be greatly above the eſtimate which Mr. Pitt gives of it. This, indeed, is the only article in which any difference of importance will be found to occur between Mr. Pitt's calculation of our income and that which I have thus ventured to oppoſe to it; I mean in thoſe articles on which Mr. Pitt has made his eſtimates: for I have added two which he has not taken into the account; income from money on bonds and other perſonal ſecurities, and that which ariſes to farmers, manufacturers, and others, who draw, as individuals, from fifteen to ſixty pounds of yearly income. The firſt of which, particularly as it is meant to include the income from all banks in the kingdom, will not probably be conceived to be overrated at ſix millions; nor will the ſum which I have affixed to the latter be conſidered as high by any who advert to the number by whom it is poſſeſſed. It will ſcarcely be doubted, in the preſent proſperous ſtate of Great Britain, when the number of our manufacturers who are highly paid is great, that thirty-five pounds is rather below than above the average of their incomes; or that the number of this claſs, in which is included, as I have already obſerved, all farmers and others whoſe incomes run from fifteen to ſixty pounds, is not

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fully more than that at which I have rated it, namely two millions; and, therefore, that the income which it is ſuppoſed to yield, is not over-charged at ſeventy millions.

On the ſuppoſition of this eſtimate of the national income being not far from the truth, we have next to advert to the extent of the aſſeſſments which ought to be raiſed on it; or rather, to the amount of thoſe which our preſent ſituation and circumſtances appear to require.

Were we now at peace, great as our public debt is, a very moderate tax, if equally levied, would, on this extenſive income, be fully equal to the intereſt thereof, as well as for all the neceſſary expences of government. But, even during war, this extent of income is ſuch, as, under a well regulated plan, conducted with due attention to economy, would admit of the greateſt ſums being raiſed from it that we can ever probably need, and even without any material diſtreſs to any part of the community.

The ſums which from time to time government may require, will neceſſarily vary according to the exigencies of every year; and parliament will be beſt able to judge of the rates or proportions by which theſe ſums ſhould be levied on the different claſſes of income; a point of great importance for the ſucceſs of the ſcheme, and requiring therefore the moſt deliberate conſideration. The trial even of one year will in a point of ſuch uncertainty produce more

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real information, than can be obtained from any opinion resting only on speculation; but, with the view of completing the object of these observations, the following are suggested as rates which the different classes of the community might probably bear with great ease, and from which a sum would be derived fully sufficient for the expences which we are told by the minister will be required for the present year, as well as for other purposes which in the following Essays I shall point out.

Beginning with the lowest class of the community, with regard to individual income, although the highest in the aggregate sum which it affords, I mean those whose incomes run from fifteen to sixty pounds, it does not appear that out of the sum of seventy millions, which we suppose may arise from the whole class, that it would be difficult to raise four millions; but on the first attempt it may be proper to confine the sum to be levied from it to three millions, being somewhat less than a twenty-third part of the average income of this class.

The rest of the national income, amounting by the foregoing calculation to one hundred and sixty-six millions, may, without inflicting any important hardship on those by whom it is possessed, be easily taxed an eighth on a general average of the whole; extending therefore to twenty millions seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds.

This might be done on various plans, and on different

ferent ſcales of gradation; and, among others which might be propoſed, the following is ſuggeſted as one that may be eaſily carried into effect.

A twelfth may be levied on incomes from ſixty to one hundred pounds; an eleventh and half, on thoſe between one hundred and a hundred and thirty pounds; an eleventh on incomes between this laſt mentioned ſum and thoſe of one hundred and ſixty; and a tenth and half on incomes between this ſum and thoſe of two hundred pounds, at which ſum they might riſe to a tenth.

For the reaſon that I have already aſſigned, namely, the great proportion of all other aſſeſſments which are paid by people in the middle ſtations of life, the ſame rate ſhould be continued from incomes of two hundred pounds per annum to thoſe of fifteen hundred. At this ſum they might riſe to a ninth and half, and proceed on an eaſy ſcale of gradation till fortunes of ten thouſand pounds ſhould pay a ſeventh; thoſe of fifteen thouſand a ſixth; incomes of twenty thouſand a fifth and half; of twenty-five thouſand a fifth; of thirty thouſand a fourth and half; of thirty-five thouſand a fourth; incomes of forty thouſand a third and half; and of forty-five thouſand and upwards a third.

In this manner it appears that the ſum of twenty-three millions ſeven hundred and fifty thouſand pounds may be yearly levied on the income of Great Britain, without any particular act of ſeverity being committed on any one claſs of the community; for, while

while by this plan every income would be aſſeſſed, no conſiderable ſum would be raiſed from thoſe in the middle or lower ranks of ſociety, nor from any individual whoſe income could not admit of it. Proprietors of very extenſive fortunes might, indeed, for a time be deprived of ſome of the ſuperfluities of life which hitherto they have poſſeſſed; but even this inconvenience would ſpeedily, in a great meaſure, diſappear, by the effect which ſoon would reſult, as I have already had occaſion to obſerve, from the operation of this tax in the reduction of the price of labour, as well as of every article of conſumption.

But whether this conſequence ſhould enſue from it or not, and even although higher rates ſhould be required than thoſe which I have mentioned for producing the ſum which the exigencies of the times may require, the wealth of the nation at preſent is ſuch, and the deſire of all by whom it is poſſeſſed ſo great for giving ſupport to government, that any well digeſted plan, which the miniſter may bring forth with a view to it, will ſcarcely fail of being well received by the community. If therefore a tenth, a ninth, or an eighth of the national income be not ſufficient, he has only to mention a ſeventh, a ſixth, or even a greater proportion, and it would almoſt univerſally be approved of. Some there neceſſarily are who would object to it, as always happens on every deviation from the common routine of buſineſs; but the number would

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be few, their fears would ſoon appear to be groundleſs, and ought not therefore to be regarded.

Of the ſum which we thus ſuppoſe to be levied on the national income, amounting to twenty-three millions ſeven hundred and fifty thouſand pounds, eighteen, nineteen, or twenty millions, may be required for the yearly expence of our war eſtabliſhment; and we ſhall calculate on the higheſt of theſe ſums, although conſiderably more than appears will be wanted for the preſent year. For the application of the remainder, being three millions ſeven hundred and fifty thouſand pounds, ſome very important purpoſes will be propoſed in the two following Eſſays.

OF THE NATIONAL DEBT; OF THE FUNDS; AND OF THE PLAN OF SUPPORTING THE FUNDS BY A SALE OF THE LAND-TAX.

If the opinion were well founded, which hitherto has generally prevailed, of the magnitude of our public debt being a national advantage, and the high price of the funds a criterion of our wealth, we ought certainly, by all reasonable means, to give them our support. But now that the vast extent of our debt is found to be both distressful and oppressive, by tending to impede every operation requiring large advances of money, and acting, as it certainly does, in depriving a great proportion of the inhabitants of many of those comforts which otherwise they might enjoy, few who have considered the subject, will doubt of its being proper and necessary, that the wealth of the nation should, to a certain extent, and with all possible dispatch, be employed,

not only to prevent the farther increaſe of this debt, but to pay off a conſiderable part of what has been already accumulated.

No good reaſon can be given why the ſtate of the funds ſhould be conſidered as an index or criterion of our national wealth. Till of late, indeed, no adequate judgment could be formed of this point: for, while government continued to believe it to be for their advantage to depend entirely on the funding ſyſtem for their ſupplies, the power of thoſe connected with every department of the ſtate is neceſſarily ſuch, that the influence of this, in warping and deranging the opinions of mankind, was ſo great, that when conjoined with the machinations of all who were perſonally intereſted in the high price of the funds, its effect became irreſiſtible.

The belief being once impreſſed on the minds of the public, that our national wealth and proſperity muſt at all times be connected with the ſtate of the funds, and that the one muſt nearly keep pace with the other, we need not be ſurpriſed at the long continuance of the deluſion. The nation, from a great variety and combination of cauſes, which it is not neceſſary in this place to conſider, continued to enjoy a long and uninterrupted courſe of proſperity; which all whoſe property was fixed in the funds, were willing to place to the credit of our national debt, and to have it believed, that this ſtate of proſperity could not poſſibly continue, if the funds ſhould be allowed to ſink.

At

At laſt, however, it has luckily happened, that an opinion directly the oppoſite to this, which ſome had long entertained, but which few ventured to aſſert, is confirmed by experience. And we now find, what not many years ago would have been very difficult to believe, that the nation has not only continued to thrive under the greateſt depreſſion of her funds which ever before happened, but in a degree, both with reſpect to her manufactures and trade, of which we have no example. Nay, at this time, when all our funds have been in this very depreſſed ſtate, the three per cents fluctuating as they have done from forty-ſeven to fifty-four, not a ſingle complaint has been heard of its proving hurtful, at the ſame time that few will doubt of there being now more real wealth in the nation, than we appear to have poſſeſſed even at that period when the ſame ſtock ſold at ninety-ſix. And the time will ſoon probably arrive, when all will perceive, that our national wealth and proſperity have ſo little dependance on the ſtate of the funds, that, cæteris paribus, we ſhall thrive in proportion as they become low; the cauſes of which all who have conſidered the ſubject will underſtand; and, being one of the leading objects of theſe Eſſays to explain, it will be found detailed in different parts of them.

If this ſhall prove to be the caſe, in that full extent which there is much cauſe to expect, it will hereafter, perhaps, be conſidered as one of the moſt fortunate occurrences of the preſent times, that the

miniſter has begun to act as if in ſome degree he were convinced of the truth and force of this opinion: from which there is reaſon to hope, that we ſhall more ſpeedily enjoy thoſe important advantages which ultimately it will be found to afford, than otherwiſe we might have done. He is now ſupporting a plan for raiſing a conſiderable part of the ſupplies without the aid of the funding ſyſtem; he has repeatedly confeſſed his anxiety and ſtrong deſire to pay off the national debt; and he has the merit of having brought forth a ſinking fund for this purpoſe, on the beſt principle, of any that we ever before poſſeſſed: a fund which requires only to be ſupported by means ſomewhat more efficient, and which appear to be eaſily in our power to afford, in order to produce the moſt beneficial effects. If theſe ſhall be obtained, as they undoubtedly may eaſily be if a proper plan for an aſſeſſment of income be rigidly carried into effect, we ſhall ſoon have the ſatisfaction to find that the national debt will decreaſe quickly; that government will be enabled to remove many of the moſt oppreſſive part of our taxes; and, inſtead of harm ariſing from the funds being low, that much public benefit will accrue from it.

The miniſter, indeed, has not yet ventured to ſuggeſt, or to ſupport by argument, even in the moſt diſtant manner, the views upon which this opinion is built: he appears, on the contrary, to conſider the high price of the funds as an object of much national

importance;

importance; and has even entered on decided and ſtrong meaſures for the expreſs purpoſe of giving them his ſupport. In a great meaſure, however, this muſt proceed from his not being, as yet, clearly convinced of the propriety of deſerting the funding ſyſtem, and of truſting entirely, as he ought unqueſtionably to do, to the national ſupplies being raiſed within the year. As ſoon as he ſhall find, by the experiment which he is now making, that this is practicable, he will then, and not probably till then, perceive, that one of the moſt important national objects which Great Britain can have in view, is, not merely the ultimate extinction of her public debt, but that, in the mean time, the funds ſhould be kept at a moderate, or even at a very low rate.

Here it will, probably, be remarked, that even admitting the advantages to be conſiderable which might reſult from a low ſtate of the funds, it would, however, be unfair, and therefore improper, in the public to interfere with them. For, the funds being the property not of the nation, nor of government, but of the creditors of the nation, they ought, therefore, in every circumſtance, it may be ſaid, to be completely and fully protected, and not, in any manner of way, alienated from the purpoſe for which they were originally meant.

The propriety of this obſervation, there is reaſon to hope and believe, will never be diſputed by thoſe who have the charge and conduct of government;

for in all money tranſactions the public faith of the nation has hitherto been kept inviolate. But, although every perſon of probity will ſay, that while the engagements of government ſhould be rigidly obſerved and adhered to, in the regular payment of the intereſt due to her creditors; yet few will probably aſſert, that in any degree ſhe is bound to make good thoſe loſſes which individuals may ſuſtain by ſpeculating on the eventual prices of the funds; or that the nation ought to engage in any ſchemes or meaſures, either for giving them ſupport, or for the purpoſe of keeping them down.

The faireſt and moſt honourable plan, and more conſiſtent with the dignity and character of a rich and powerful nation, than any other that can, on this point, be purſued, would be, for government not in any way to interfere with the funds; but merely to pay the intereſt of her public debt with regularity, and to make all her future purchaſes at par.—Of this, however, we ſhall find it neceſſary to ſpeak more particularly in an enſuing part of this Eſſay; and, at preſent, ſhall proceed to ſtate and conſider thoſe inconveniencies which ſome have imagined would enſue from the national debt and funds connected therewith, being either altogether done away, or diminiſhed in any conſiderable degree.

So powerful is the influence of cuſtom, that, till of late, the heavy load of debt to which we have too long been habituated, was, by a great proportion of

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men, conſidered as ſo neceſſary for our proſperity, that they did not ſee how we could exiſt without it. Deluded by the nation continuing to proſper under all the debt which it has contracted, and not adverting to other cauſes of her wealth, this debt they were induced to conſider as one of the moſt important of the whole. But it may, with more propriety, be obſerved, in the words of a celebrated author, " that Britain has not thriven as a conſequence of her public debt, as many have very improperly ſuppoſed, but, ſurmounting every difficulty ariſing from the magnitude of this debt, that ſhe has thriven in ſpite of it."

In this view it would appear that nations are on the ſame footing with individuals. The embarraſſments ariſing from debt, are, perhaps, equally hurtful to both; ſo that every deſcription of debt, which, either from neceſſity or any other cauſe, we may have incurred, ought as quickly as poſſible to be paid off; and the fact undoubtedly is, that the country would have advanced much more rapidly in improvement, and in every reſpect would have been a more powerful nation, if no part of her debt had ever been contracted; for preciſely in proportion to the amount of her debt, ſhe was at all times crippled in the means of improving her territory, the only permanent ſource of wealth, power, and ſecurity, which a nation can poſſeſs; as, in various parts of theſe Eſſays, will be more fully explained.

Many, again, are of opinion, that the influence of the funds is conſiderable in giving ſtrength to government; proceeding on the ſuppoſition of their ſecuring the exertions of thoſe whoſe property happens to be placed in them. But, although this ſhould be admitted in the fulleſt extent, that all, who have their property fixed in the funds, would wiſh to give their ſupport to government, thoſe, who place any conſiderable value on this, do not appear to recollect, that, while a few only are from this cauſe intereſted in ſupporting the funds, the number is great whoſe intereſt, upon the ſame principle, it certainly is, to have them for ever done away or annihilated. All who are taxed for the yearly payment of the intereſt of our public debt, muſt neceſſarily wiſh that no ſuch debt had ever exiſted. And, in ſo far as the payment of this may be difficult, it muſt neceſſarily tend to weaken, and not to add to the ſtrength of government, by ſerving to leſſen the attachment of all that part of the nation towards it who, not being concerned in the funds, nor having any part of their property placed in them, are burthened with ſevere taxes, for the ſole purpoſe of paying large annuities to others, which, as far as they yet ſee, are to be perpetual. It is not enough to obſerve that this debt is juſt, and that we are bound to ſubmit to the difficulties which it has produced. The ſpeculative principles of the times are ſuch as never exiſted before; and have already induced many to ſay, that this debt ought not to

have

have been contracted. In this view, therefore, and in ſo far as it is aſſuredly better to prevent than to remove the deſtructive conſequences which might reſult from a continuance of theſe ſentiments, it muſt certainly be better for government to do away, as far as may be in their power, all the evils which might enſue from opinions of this kind being foſtered and kept up. Whatever the ſentiments on this point may be of thoſe in the higher ſtations of life, and however clearly they may be of opinion, that our great load of debt ought not to have been contracted, no harm will reſult from them. They will perceive, that, ſince the debt has been incurred and ſanctioned, the nation is bound, both in juſtice and honour, to adhere, as far as her abilities will allow, to the terms on which the money was obtained from her creditors. But it is the duty of government to recollect, that, while a few only are ſufficiently enlightened to argue in this manner, a very great proportion of the community, perhaps nine-tenths of the whole, are not: a conſideration of no ſmall importance in all that relates, ſo nearly and eſſentially, to the peace and ſecurity of the realm.

If our national debt ſhould ever be paid off, thoſe who hitherto have been accuſtomed to place their money in the funds, have been induced to ſuſpect that they would not know how to make uſe of it; as they have not been able to foreſee how this great maſs of property could be employed which is now lent to government. Many have even ſuppoſed, if

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they ſhould ever be obliged to receive payment of their money now in the funds, that it would frequently be left in their coffers for want of demand.

This, certainly, would not happen. A conſiderable part of our national wealth would remain where it now is, diffuſed in every diſtrict, and giving ſupport to agriculture, manufactures, and commerce. But, in addition to this, the whole money of the nation would at laſt be employed in the ſame manner, as it always ought to have been. Inſtead of large ſums being kept in readineſs for ſpeculating in the funds, which is now done to the extent of many millions, the whole would be lent for more uſeful purpoſes; for the improvement of every branch of national induſtry, and for the advancement of every ſcheme of utility. In this caſe, too, as monied men would have little temptation to withdraw their property from thoſe to whom it might be lent, buſineſs of every kind would proceed with more ſteadineſs and ſecurity than hitherto has been the caſe; when, on every new loan, the trade and manufactures of the whole kingdom have ſuffered ſeverely, being often ſhaken to their very foundation, by immenſe ſums being ſuddenly taken from them, merely for the advantage to be obtained by thoſe high gratuities, which, in times of difficulty, government is reduced to the neceſſity of giving.

There would ſtill be full demand for all the money in the nation, were it even double its preſent amount; for which the moſt complete ſecurity, that

that of landed property, would at all times be readily obtained, ſolely for the purpoſe of improving the very ſoil, on which it might be ſecured; while thoſe who might not be ſatisfied with the ordinary intereſt of money, would at all times be able to fix their capitals in one or other of thoſe trading or manufacturing companies, which now may be found in every part of the kingdom.

In various ways it might be ſhewn, that the method of raiſing ſupplies on the funding ſyſtem has proved highly detrimental to the improvement and progreſs of Britain. But in nothing more does it appear to have done ſo than in the influence which it has had, and which it neceſſarily muſt continue to have, as long as it prevails, in preventing the national wealth from being applied in the improvement of her ſoil, manufactures, and commerce; the only purpoſes, after giving ample protection to government, and affording full ſecurity againſt invaſion from abroad, and treaſon at home, for which it ought ever to be uſed. Inſtead of which, it has, very unfortunately, been diverted to the moſt uſeleſs and baneful purpoſes, for which money can well be employed, that of giving encouragement to a national ſpirit for gambling and diſſipation; as the large ſums which fortunate adventurers in the funds are occaſionally enabled to realiſe, have, in a very eminent degree, tended to do.

For theſe, and other reaſons which might be adduced, it is now admitted, by almoſt all who have

conſidered the ſubject, that we have much cauſe to regret that the funding ſyſtem ever took place. But our regret at the miſapplication of the national wealth and reſources, of which this method of raiſing money has been the cauſe, muſt be increaſed in a tenfold degree, when we reflect on the deſtructive influence, with which, in this manner, it has operated, in retarding every uſeful ſcheme of improvement, and, more eſpecially, the advancement of agriculture; an art which ought to be made the forerunner of all others, and to which the foſtering ſupport of every government ought, in a marked and obvious manner, to be given.

If the funding ſyſtem had never been adopted, there is much reaſon to believe, that, without labouring, as we now do, under the preſſure of a great load of debt, all our wars might have been carried on equally well; and, by the application of thoſe conſiderable ſums yearly to the improvement of land, which were thus placed for no uſeful purpoſe in the funds, that the produce, as well as the population of Great Britain, would, long ago, have extended to more than double their preſent amount.

There is full cauſe, indeed, to imagine, that our advancement in theſe, and every other uſeful attainment, has been retarded for more than a century, by the influence of this unfortunate ſyſtem, which, in truth, may be conſidered as the gulph of our national wealth and proſperity, as long as it is permitted to exiſt.

Thoſe who, in their views and conſideration of wealth, advert only to money, and to thoſe appearances of proſperity, which an abundance of money will always produce, are apt, upon theſe obſervations, to remark, that they muſt neceſſarily be ill founded; in ſo far as Great Britain is now, and long been, in a very thriving condition; and, therefore, that neither the great maſs of debt which ſhe owes, nor the influence of the funds in attracting the wealth of the nation towards them, can be ſuppoſed to have done harm.

This train of reaſoning, or rather, of begging the queſtion, will not, in this inſtance, bear the diſcuſſion of fair argument. By the fortunate concurrence of many cauſes, ſome of which have been already explained, this country has, no doubt, arrived at a great degree of proſperity; inſomuch, that ſhe is now looked upon with envy by all the nations which ſurround her. But we are not entitled to ſay, becauſe our ſituation is good, when compared with that of others, that it might not have been better with a different application of thoſe funds and other means that were in our power. As well might a cultivator of land, who had rendered his property better than his forefathers had ever done, pretend to ſay, that, becauſe he could live more comfortably than they were able to do, and even better than any of his neighbours, merely by improving his farm to one half of the extent of which it was capable, that therefore he had done enough, and would not be at the

trouble

trouble of carrying his improvements farther. And the truth is, that Great Britain is preciſely in this ſituation. We have done more than any of our neighbours. But ſtill an immenſe deal remains to be done! And, although we are rich in money, we are eminently deficient in articles greatly more important. Not only in population, when compared with our extent of territory, which, with a different application of our reſources, might be enabled to maintain thirty millions of people, better than ten millions are ſupported at preſent: but in the quantity of corn abſolutely required for the ſubſiſtence of our preſent numbers; for which we are yearly obliged to apply to foreigners to a very conſiderable extent. Few, who have not conſidered the ſubject with attention, will believe, that on an average of theſe laſt ſixteen years, our expence to other nations, for imported grain, has not been leſs than fifteen hundred thouſand pounds! at beſt a very melancholy conſideration, but particularly when we reflect, on our having at one period drawn a large ſum annually for grain exported to others: an alteration of circumſtances ſo derogatory to the national character, and ſo likely to interfere with our internal peace and ſecurity, that every means in our power ought, without loſs of time, to be employed, for counteracting it with deciſion and effect.

Thoſe countries only can be ſaid to be rich, in which, by a proper application of the national funds, agriculture is brought to the utmoſt degree of perfection

fection of which it is capable; by which encouragement is given to an extenſive population, and food provided in abundance for all that are produced; nor, till this takes place in Great Britain, are we entitled to ſay that we are opulent. Hamburgh is rich. Amſterdam and Venice both were rich—in money, but not in that ſource of real wealth and happineſs, abundance of the neceſſaries of life, provided by the exertions of their own people, in their own fields. Hamburgh accordingly depends, as Venice and Amſterdam did, on others, for her very means of exiſtence! and, like them, would probably fall, on the firſt appearance of an enemy; an occurrence which never has taken place, nor never probably will happen, in any country whoſe inhabitants are of that bold intrepid character, which thoſe, who are employed chiefly in tillage, never fail to poſſeſs: a character, therefore, in which our peaſantry ſhould at all times be encouraged, as being not only congenial with thoſe principles of independence under which they are reared, but as it would tend to give complete ſecurity to the whole empire.

In ſo far, therefore, as this ſtate of opulence and independence on other nations for our ſubſiſtence is deſirable, every man, who wiſhes well to his country, ought to do every thing in his power for the ſpeedy removal of our national debt. For, till this ſhall be done, either entirely, or in a very conſiderable degree, there is much reaſon to dread that no important change will take place in this very intereſting

part

part of our ſituation. By the temptations which ſpeculations in the funds hold forth, a very great proportion of the national wealth will, probably, ſtill continue to be attracted towards them, as hitherto it very unfortunately has been. So that, if the full improvement of our country is conceived to be an object of real utility and importance, a plan ſhould be immediately brought forth, not only for the ultimate extinction of our public debt, by preventing its farther increaſe in the mean time, and paying off yearly all that may be in our power, but for the purpoſe of putting a ſtop to that ſpirit for ſpeculating in the funds, which hitherto has ſo univerſally prevailed among people of all ranks. Till this is done, our improvements in every branch of agriculture, muſt proceed ſlowly and with languor; or, perhaps, even remain ſtationary, as they now appear to be doing; for, however opulent the nation may be, the funds employed in tillage will not probably be increaſed, till this vortex, by which a great proportion of them is abſorbed, is completely and entirely done away.

To leſſen the national debt ſuddenly in any conſiderable degree, would require ſuch a high general aſſeſſment, as, in various ways, might prove hurtful. I mean, during war; for, on the return of peace, it would be eaſily in the power of government, as there is much reaſon to believe, to pay off upwards of thirty millions of the three per cents yearly. But, even during the continuance of war, it appears

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to be perfectly practicable to add a large ſum to the ſinking fund yearly; and, thereby, to reduce the magnitude of the evil, in the mean time, very conſiderably.

The ſum which at preſent is applied to the ſinking fund, is upwards of four millions per annum. By the taxation of income, which we have had occaſion to conſider in the preceding eſſay, twenty-three millions ſeven hundred and fifty thouſand pounds, there is reaſon to ſuppoſe, will be produced. And, as twenty millions appear to be fully adequate to the yearly expences of the war, if a million and a half of the reſidue be ſet apart for a purpoſe to be hereafter mentioned, and the reſt, amounting to two millions two hundred and fifty thouſand pounds, be added to the ſinking fund, making the whole upwards of ſix millions, our public debt would thus be reduced yearly, by the purchaſe of ſtock to the amount of ten millions, reckoning on the three per cents only being purchaſed, and the tranſaction to be done at par.

In this manner, even during war, a very conſiderable part of our debt would, in a few years, be paid off, particularly if the intereſt of the ſums purchaſed annually be made to accumulate, as hitherto has been done with the ſinking fund. But it appears to be a point deſerving the moſt ſerious conſideration of government, how far it would not be better to forego, at leaſt for the ſpace of a few years, the advantages that would accrue from a more rapid increaſe of the fund; and, inſtead of adding the intereſt of the purchaſed debt to the capital, to leſſen or

remove all ſuch parts of our preſent taxes as prove particularly ſevere in their operation. Of this nature, and firſt, in the pernicious effects which they produce, muſt be ranked, all ſuch taxes as tend to retard the progreſs of agriculture; ſuch as thoſe on malt, ale, horſes and carts employed in farming; the tax on ſalt, and all ſaline ſubſtances which otherwiſe might be employed as manures: and, next to theſe, all ſuch taxes as tend to raiſe the common articles of conſumption above the price which people in the middle ranks of life can afford to give for them; of which thoſe on wine, tea, and ſugar, are at preſent perhaps the moſt important.

It may, indeed, be obſerved, that theſe not being articles of neceſſity, but of luxury, nothing can with more propriety be taxed. But, though this may be proper and reaſonable to a certain extent, it muſt be obvious that it may be carried too far; as there is reaſon to believe is at preſent the caſe with the taxes on all theſe articles.

If the ſinking fund be increaſed to ſix millions, and the intereſt thereof applied in this manner, as three hundred thouſand pounds of our preſent taxes would thus be done away yearly, the relief which, on this plan, might be given to almoſt all claſſes of the community, would be ſo great, that the ſcheme of placing all future aſſeſſments upon income, would meet with a much better reception than otherwiſe it may probably do.

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Even although no addition may be made to the ſinking fund, the moſt beneficial effects would ariſe from applying the intereſt of it in this manner. It would give ſatisfaction to people in every rank; but, to all whoſe fortunes are moderate, and eſpecially to annuitants of ſmall income, who of late have ſuffered proportionally more than others have done, it would afford a degree of relief which hitherto they have not perhaps expected, but which certainly ought to be given them, as ſoon as with any propriety can be done. It appears, indeed, to be a meaſure of equity, to which the preſent generation will be entitled, if they come freely forward not only with the war expences within the year, but with ſeveral millions annually for the removal of that great load of debt, which, unfortunately, has been accumulating for more than a century; and that would paſs on with the moſt deſtructive conſequences to their ſucceſſors, were they now to act with leſs public ſpirit and energy.

In the courſe of a few years the moſt important effects would reſult from a due application even of the intereſt of the preſent ſinking fund, in leſſening the amount of our exiſting taxes: every article of conſumption would fall in value; by which all our manufactures would not only be ſold at lower rates at home, but the nation would be enabled, with more certainty, to preſerve the ſuperiority which it has attained in foreign markets. As proviſions would be more eaſily obtained, population

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would increaſe; at the ſame time that a ſtop would be put to thoſe extenſive emigrations, which only a few years ago roſe to a very alarming height, and to which there is reaſon to ſuſpect that only a temporary check has been given, by the war in which almoſt every kingdom in Europe is more or leſs engaged.

The high rents which of late years proprietors have put upon their lands, has, indeed, been aſſigned as the chief cauſe of theſe emigrations. But from what cauſe did theſe high rents proceed? From the only well-founded cauſe of complaint which exiſts in this country; the high price of all the neceſſaries and comforts of life, the certain conſequence of the high taxes which people in every rank are obliged to pay for the regular diſcharge of the intereſt of our national debt; and by which, landholders, like the proprietors of all other commodities, have been obliged, from time to time, to raiſe the rents of their eſtates; although by no means in proportion to the riſe which has taken place in the price of other articles. The reverſe, indeed, will be found, on a fair inquiry, to have happened; for, while merchants and manufacturers, are, very univerſally all over the kingdom, living in eaſe, luxury, and affluence, a great proportion of thoſe whoſe property conſiſts entirely in land, find it impoſſible to live upon their income, and are therefore deeply in debt. So that while the ſituation of one part of the community has been

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daily improving better, that of landed proprietors has become conſiderably worſe. Fifty or ſixty years ago, landholders were not only conſidered as the moſt reſpectable claſs of inhabitants, but they were unqueſtionably the moſt opulent. Now they ſtand low in the ſcale with regard to wealth; and with this their reſpectability would likewiſe ſoon ſink, were they not to be ſupported.

Thoſe who have not adverted to the important change which has thus taken place in the ſtate of country gentlemen, are apt to obſerve, that it muſt proceed from a fault in their mode of living, which they ought therefore to correct. But this is ſo far from being in general the caſe, that even with the utmoſt economy and attention, it is not now in their power to live as they formerly did. Their income, indeed, is increaſed; but not in proportion to the taxes with which they have been loaded, or to thoſe great fortunes by which they are every where ſurrounded; either acquired more ſlowly by our merchants and manufacturers at home, or more ſuddenly imported from the Eaſt and Weſt Indies. In conſequence of which, and to the great detriment of the nation, a very large proportion of families, who formerly lived chiefly, or perhaps entirely, on their eſtates, are now obliged to remove to towns, where they may with more eaſe live in obſcure retirement; and thus leſſen both their importance and utility together with their expence of living.

Nothing but a conſiderable reduction of our pub-

lic debt can tend to avert the deſtructive conſequences which ſoon would enſue from this reſpectable part of the community being obliged to deſert their domains, and to leave them in the poſſeſſion of agents. We ought, therefore, as we value the peace and ſafety of the realm, and in order to prevent thoſe dreadful calamities which have fallen upon other countries, particularly on one of the moſt important of the Britiſh dominions, almoſt at our very doors, the kingdom of Ireland, chiefly from the non-reſidence of proprietors, to do all in our power to obviate and remove the cauſe of it among ourſelves. And it may be ſpeedily done, if the plan which is here pointed out, or any other on ſimilar principles, be purſued with ſteadineſs.

That this, however, or any other ſcheme which may be preferred for the reduction of our national debt, may proceed without interruption, a price ſhould be fixed by act of parliament, at which all quantities of ſtock ſhall hereafter be ſold, which government may be enabled to purchaſe; otherwiſe, as the quantity of ſtock would yearly leſſen by the very operation of the ſcheme itſelf, the value of the remainder might riſe to more than the public ought to give for it.

The value thus to be affixed to it being a point of much importance to ſtockholders, as well as to the public, would require very ample conſideration. The plan leaſt liable to objection would probably be,

be, to enable government to purchaſe every variety of ſtock at par, or the price at which it was borrowed; from which, indeed, much benefit would accrue to many who have purchaſed while ſtocks have been low; but, as individuals obliged to part with their properties ſhould at all times be well paid for them, and as it would tend greatly to ſupport the national character to give a fair allowance to their public creditors, a ſacrifice to this amount will not, perhaps, on this view of it, be conſidered as more than ought to be made.

If, however, it be judged a hardſhip to oblige ſtockholders who have purchaſed when the funds were high, to ſell at par, it may be conſidered, how far it might be proper to admit of all holders of ſtock being entitled to receive for it, in all their tranſactions with government, the prices, whether they were high or low, which they actually paid for it previous to a law for this purpoſe taking place. The conſequence of which would be, that while much ſtock might be purchaſed above par, much would be ſold at leſs. So that, on the whole, the difference between the two ſchemes, in point of expence to government, would not be conſiderable.

Whichever ſcheme be adopted, the effect will probably be, to prevent all varieties of ſtock from riſing much above par. They would commonly, indeed, ſell at leſs; by which an entire ſtop would be put to that deſtructive ſpirit for gambling which the high price of the funds tends

ſo remarkably to produce; from which this farther public benefit would accrue; the whole of our national wealth, as I have already had occaſion to remark, would, in that caſe, be generally diffuſed and employed in every variety of uſeful undertaking through the kingdom, inſtead of being kept in that unproductive ſtate in which, to a large amount, it has hitherto been; either when there has been the proſpect of large advantages being given by government, or of a conſiderable riſe in the price of the funds being likely to take place.

As ſoon, however, as the real intereſt of the nation, on this very important point, ſhall be underſtood, an immediate and certain remedy for the evil is luckily in our power. Let the price of ſtock for the future purchaſes of government be fixed either on the plan which I have ſuggeſted, or on any other that may appear to be more fair and equitable, for thoſe who may be obliged to ſell; but which will not be ſo high, by a great deal, as the prices which heretofore have commonly been given; and a very important part of the baneful tendency of the funding ſyſtem will at once be done away; for, if a moderate fair price be fixed on, above which the ſtocks ſhould never be allowed to riſe, as no conſiderable gain could, in that caſe, be derived from ſpeculating on their eventual increaſe, no large ſums would in future be kept in reſerve, as hitherto has been done with a view to this deſtructive traffick.

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In the mean time the effect of it would be great and immediate, in promoting every national improvement; while the advantages, that would accrue to all claſſes of men, from their taxes on articles of conſumption being diminiſhed, either on the plan which has here been ſuggeſted, or on ſome other that might be ſuppoſed to anſwer better, would ſoon be great, beyond all that, at firſt view, can perhaps be ſuppoſed to ariſe from it.

Government, however, has not as yet ſo completely abandoned the funding ſyſtem, as to admit of their acting in this manner. Not daring to truſt entirely to any other ſource for their ſupplies, they ſtill judge it proper to ſupport the funds with their whole intereſt. For which purpoſe, an act of parliament has been obtained for the ſale of the national land-tax; the price of which being applied to the purchaſe of ſtock, as the quantity would be thereby greatly reduced, the remainder would neceſſarily riſe in value.

But, as there is reaſon to believe, that the ſcheme, in every part of it, would prove hurtful, not only to proprietors of land, but to the whole nation, it luckily happens that it is not likely to be ever carried into effect. The difficulties to which it is liable, are indeed ſo various and important, as to leave little room to believe that much of the land-tax will ever be purchaſed.

While the ſcheme would certainly prove greatly detrimental to the public, by giving a high artificial value

value to the funds, and would thus ſerve to attract a ſtill greater proportion of the national wealth towards them, it would act immediately, and in various ways, to the diſadvantage of all proprietors of land who might veſt their money in the purchaſe of this tax. If the quantity of three per cents, now fixed on as the price of it, ſhould be given, no advantage would accrue from the tranſaction till this ſtock ſhould fall below fifty per cent; ſo that whatever is given for it above fifty per cent, together with every article of expence to agents, muſt be conſidered as an entire and immediate pecuniary loſs, for which no benefit is ever to be received. While on the plan of purchaſing with money, it muſt be equally detrimental, if more than twenty years purchaſe ſhall ever be given for it; at the ſame time, that no advantage whatever can be derived from it by government, if more than this be not obtained for it.

It would be placing a very extenſive capital in a ſituation highly diſadvantageous to the adventurer, from which no adequate return could be obtained. It would, in fact, be ſinking the money, on a permanent annuity indeed, of ſomewhat leſs than five per cent; but, when the ſame rate of intereſt, or even more, can be every where got, and on the beſt ſecurity, with a certainty of the money being repaid when deſired, the diſadvantage of fixing it on the ſame annuity, with no certainty of being able to reſume the capital when it might even be particularly wanted, muſt be clear and obvious.

On this view of the meaſure, it would be obliging the proprietors of land, not only to pay a heavy annual aſſeſſment, over and above what is done by any other claſs of the community, as hitherto they have done to the extent of two millions yearly! but to place an immenſe capital, to the amount of forty millions, as the purchaſe of this aſſeſſment, in a ſituation very diſadvantageous to them and their families. For it is not true, that money employed for the purchaſe of this tax is placed on the ſame footing with money expended on the purchaſe of land. The value of land is expected to improve; and, in a great proportion of caſes, it undoubtedly does ſo in a very conſiderable degree; whereas annuities, ariſing from money ſunk on the purchaſe of the land-tax, will remain permanently the ſame: real property in land is uſually connected with ſome degree of intereſt and conſideration, which will not attach to mere annuitants on land.

Another very important objection with landholders to the purchaſe of this tax, muſt be, that if it were removed, they would ſoon, probably, be made liable to another, probably of greater extent.

In anſwer to this, indeed, it is ſaid, that other aſſeſſments may be placed upon land, whether the preſent tax which it pays be purchaſed or not. But the leaſt conſideration muſt make it appear, that no miniſter will ſo readily place a new aſſeſſment on land while highly charged with an old one,

one, as he might be induced to do were the land entirely clear.

It is obviouſly, therefore, againſt the intereſt of landholders to purchaſe their land-tax, even from the immediate effects which, in a pecuniary view, would reſult from it. Nor ſhould they be induced, by any conſideration, to make this purchaſe, if the abſolute promiſe of government be not given them, that their properties ſhall not, in future, be aſſeſſed but in an equal proportion with every other article of income.

If this ſhall be done, and the preſent tax be diſpoſed of at leſs than twenty years purchaſe, it may be for the intereſt of ſuch proprietors of land as poſſeſs large monied capitals, to purchaſe their ſhares of it; otherwiſe they muſt be hurt, in a moſt important degree, by the tranſaction.

Nor is it fair or equitable that the purchaſe of this tax ſhould be expected of landholders; a meaſure which, on the plan by which it is meant to carry it into effect, would prove ſo ruinous to that uſeful and important claſs of the community, that it undoubtedly has been adopted without adverting to the deſtructive conſequences which it is likely to produce.

When there was little or no other wealth in the nation, land was neceſſarily conſidered as the chief object of taxation. But, now that land avowedly, even on Mr. Pitt's calculation, does not yield one third of the national income, and on mine

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not nearly a fifth, is it proper or juſt that it ſhould be taxed more heavily than other properties are?

Inſtead of calling upon the proprietors of land to purchaſe their land-tax, or expecting others to do it, this tax ought, in equity, to be at once annihilated, and income from land be put upon the ſame footing with that which ariſes from any other ſource. Were this to be done, there is reaſon to believe that more public benefit would accrue from it than is ever likely to ariſe from the plan which government appears at preſent willing to promote for it.

One certain effect of any extraordinary ſum of money being advanced by proprietors of land, and ſurely forty millions, only about the neat value of the land-tax at twenty years purchaſe, is an extraordinary ſum, would be, that their eſtates would not be ſo fully improved as they now are. The influence of this, again, on the produce of land, need ſcarcely be noticed. The effect would be almoſt as inſtantaneous as it would be univerſal. Improvements would be neglected in proportion to the amount of this advance; produce would fall ſhort, and proviſions of every kind be to purchaſe at greater expence than hitherto they have ever been. Were men of landed property equally opulent with merchants, bankers, and manufacturers, there would be leſs objection to their purchaſing this tax; as, in that caſe, they might not only advance the price of

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it to government, but, at the ſame time, retain a ſufficiency for the improvement of their eſtates.

But although, at one period, it was ſuppoſed, by many, that landholders were in general ſufficiently wealthy to admit of this, yet thoſe who have had beſt acceſs to be acquainted with the real ſituation of this claſs of the community, have long known that it is far from being ſo; and the fact has been amply confirmed by the event of the experiment on the increaſed amount of the aſſeſſed taxes of laſt year; from which it clearly appears, as in the courſe of theſe obſervations has been repeatedly noticed, that the wealth of the nation is not now in the hands of landholders.

Situated, therefore, as, in a great proportion of inſtances, the proprietors of land undoubtedly are, with funds in no degree adequate to the improvement of their poſſeſſions, to deprive them of a conſiderable part of them, for the ſpeculative purpoſe of giving an artificial value to the funds, appears to be a meaſure replete with a degree of miſchief that ſhould not be hazarded. It muſt alſo, on mature conſideration, appear to be an act of ſuch ſeverity, as, perhaps, was never before inflicted on any branch of the community. With the ſame propriety every other claſs in the nation ſhould be obliged to purchaſe the various taxes which they now pay, for their windows, houſes, carriages, and other articles; nor, till this indeed is reſolved upon, can any good reaſon be

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aſſigned for a hardſhip of this magnitude, complicated, and fraught as it is, with various pernicious conſequences, being made to attach to thoſe whoſe property conſiſts in land.

Again: it has been ſaid, that the land-tax will be purchaſed by others, if it be not by the proprietors. Time only can ſhew whether this will happen or not; but there is reaſon to believe that it will not take place to any conſiderable amount. I have already had occaſion to remark, that no particular benefit can accrue from money being placed in this manner, unleſs the land-tax be ſold at leſs than twenty years purchaſe, which it can never be for the intereſt of government to do, while all ſums of money that may be placed on this ſecurity muſt at all times be attended with one very important diſadvantage. They would poſſeſs, indeed, the moſt complete ſecurity for the payment of the intereſt; but no certainty, on the part of the proprietors, of being ever able to reſume their capitals. Now, in veſting money, beſides full ſecurity for the regular payment of intereſt, people wiſh to have it in their power to reſume the principal ſums likewiſe. But this would not be the caſe with money employed in purchaſing the land-tax; for neither government, nor any individual, would ever be obliged to pay it; by which, money, fixed in this manner, would be attended with a degree of inconvenience which does not attach to loans, even on common mortgages. It may, indeed, be obſerved, that, in courſe of time,

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money in this ſituation may be expected to become ſaleable, like other kinds of ſtock. This, however, would not probably happen; for, being liable to difficulties which do not apply to other kinds of ſtock, property in this ſtate would have little or no chance of ever riſing in value, while, very commonly, it might ſell with conſiderable loſs. The intereſt not being payable in London, nor any where but in the counties where the principal ſums might be ſecured, would, in the courſe of buſineſs, be productive of ſo much inconvenience and diſtreſs, that, from this cauſe alone, monied men muſt very univerſally be induced to object to it.

There is, therefore, no reaſon to believe that much of the land-tax will ever be purchaſed. The ſcheme holding out no particular benefit whatever to men of landed property, while, in various ways, it would prove hurtful, individually, to all of them; prejudicial, in a great degree, to the progreſs of agriculture and manufactures; and inconvenient to men with money capitals, few, who have had theſe circumſtances in view, will be inclined to engage in it.

But, while there is much cauſe to imagine that no conſiderable part of the land-tax will ever be purchaſed, it does not appear, either that any inconvenience will be experienced by government from the failure of the ſcheme, or that, in any manner of way, the public will be hurt by it. The national debt, indeed, will not be reduced, which otherwiſe it might

have been. But, as this was to have been done, not by the operation of any new funds or resources, but by the alienation of a sum nearly equal to the legal interest of the debt to be purchased, any advantage to be derived from the transaction would have been more apparent than real; delusive, and therefore not to be trusted.

The reduction of our public debt, as quickly as with propriety it can be done, is an object of such utility and necessity, that all, who wish well to their country, must certainly hope to see it accomplished. Nay, it appears to be the desire of almost every individual in the nation, that a scheme for this purpose should, without loss of time, be adopted. The minister has, therefore, little or no opposition to expect to any well-concerted plan which he inclines to propose with a view to it; either by a farther taxation of income, or in any other way that, on farther consideration, may appear to be preferable. But, that a plan for this important purpose may meet with the full and entire support of the public, without which no considerable scheme of finance can succeed, it must rest on a foundation that is not in any degree delusive or doubtful, either in the means that may be required for carrying it into execution, or in the effect which it may be able to produce. If a plan were now brought forth, from which it should appear, that, in the course of a few years, a considerable part of the national debt could be paid off, and that the interest of the debt

thus to be purchaſed, ſhould be applied yearly for the removal of thoſe taxes which hitherto have been placed on articles of conſumption, the moſt deciſive ſupport would be given to it by perſons of every rank; for it ſo happens, that, on this important point, all claſſes of men are of the ſame opinion. They are anxious to ſupport that conſtitution and government, under which they and their forefathers have enjoyed more complete happineſs and ſecurity, than ever, perhaps, fell to the lot of any other people. They ſee that nothing is ſo likely to deprive them of theſe eſſential and peculiar benefits, or of the power of tranſmitting them to their poſterity, as the evils which they are apprehenſive may ariſe from the great accumulation of national debt, were it not to be ſpeedily reduced. And, although highly taxed already, yet, finding that they are poſſeſſed of means, which, if applied with economy, would be fully adequate to the purpoſe, they will not only give them with cheerfulneſs, but are deſirous, on theſe conditions, that they may be called for.

With the miniſter, therefore, the buſineſs muſt reſt; and, whenever he ſhall think fit to act in it, he will probably find, from the general approbation with which a ſcheme of ſuch univerſal utility will be received, that it will not only be eaſily carried into effect, but that it will every where diffuſe more ſatisfaction than ever before aroſe from any propoſal which he, or any other in the conduct of government, have had it in their power to eſtabliſh.

OF THE IMPROVEMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

In the preceding eſſay I had occaſion to remark, that landholders, inſtead of being deſired to purchaſe their land-tax, ought at once to be relieved from it, and be put on the ſame footing with thoſe whoſe wealth ariſes from money or other property producing income. In equity this ought certainly to be done; and there is reaſon to hope that at no very diſtant period it will happen.

As long, however, as it is judged proper to continue this ſingular and ſevere aſſeſſment on land, which will probably be the caſe as long as landed proprietors think proper not even to make a requeſt to parliament to get free of it, and ſhall ſubmit to it without ſaying that it is a grievance, as hitherto they have very unaccountably done, there is juſt one method of applying the fund that is obtained from it, which might give ſatisfaction to thoſe on whom it is levied, and to which there is reaſon to hope they will appear to be entitled.

The purpoſe to which I allude, is the Improvement of Agriculture; an object of more real importance to Great Britain, than any that we can ever perhaps have in view. Our commerce and manufactures are very productive; but, if in ſearch of this kind of wealth, we neglect the neceſſaries and comforts of life, we ſhall retain the ſhadow, and loſe the ſubſtance; while in the act of doing ſo we incur the riſk of loſing both our ſpirit and independence, together with that importance among nations which we have gained; the neceſſary effect of our becoming dependent on others for our ſubſiſtence.

Agriculture, as the firſt and moſt important object with all nations of territory, ſhould be carried to the greateſt poſſible perfection, before any conſiderable encouragement is given to manufactures. It ought, indeed, to be conſidered as the life and ſoul of all manufactures, which will every where proſper and flouriſh nearly in proportion as the agriculture of the country is more or leſs in a ſtate of perfection.

Some, indeed, who are accuſtomed to believe that every thing may be accompliſhed with money, are induced to ſuppoſe, that by giving full encouragement to manufactures; bringing them to a ſtate of proſperity, and thereby attracting wealth from abroad, that we muſt neceſſarily encourage our national agriculture at the ſame time. But, in reality, this is ſeldom found to happen; perhaps in no inſtance whatever with countries who poſ-

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ſeſs any conſiderable extent of territory. Nations abounding in population, as well as in the neceſſaries of life, will always derive advantage from a flouriſhing ſtate of their manufactures; and the wealth which theſe produce will give farther encouragement to the improvement of their ſoil. But, where money is already abundant, and the population not great, as is preciſely the caſe with this country at preſent, manufactures, if carried beyond a certain extent, will be productive of the very contrary effect; and may even be carried ſo far as completely to check the improvement of land. In this ſtate of a country, a few opulent merchants and manufacturers, may improve the ſmall properties which they poſſeſs in the higheſt poſſible manner; while a great proportion of the contiguous diſtricts, and even of the whole lands in the nation, equally fit for cultivation, may remain for ages in a ſtate of nature; and the cauſe is obvious.

If much larger profits are to be obtained by manufactures than can poſſibly be got in agriculture, and if higher wages are given to workmen in the one line than the other can afford, as now is undoubtedly the caſe in this country, the money-capital of the kingdom will be withdrawn from every ſcheme connected with agriculture, and placed in manufactures; at the ſame time that labourers will daily become more difficult to procure, and at laſt too expenſive to admit of being employed. Even at preſent, this is ſo far the caſe with us,

that in many diſtricts agriculture is not advancing, and evidently from this cauſe. For, over the whole nation, it will be found, that while improvements in tillage are ſtill carried on with ſpirit in counties not poſſeſſed of large manufactures, they are very commonly in a ſtate of languor, and even falling behind, where theſe have prevailed in any conſiderable degree; which not only attract almoſt the whole labourers of their ſeveral diſtricts towards them, but even the monied properties of the landholders, as well as of the farmers, who from the temptation which the profits of theſe extenſive works hold forth to them, are often induced either to become partners in them immediately themſelves, or to fix their ſons in them as partners: by which their farming capitals being diminiſhed, all farther improvements of their farms are either put entirely out of their power, or they proceed with much leſs energy and effect. So far, indeed, has the influence of this in many diſtricts gone, that if it be not quickly counteracted, more national harm is likely to enſue from it than all the wealth which the moſt flouriſhing ſtate of our manufactures can produce will ever be able to compenſate.

Nor is our ſituation, in this important point, in any degree ſingular: ſimilar cauſes will every where be productive of ſimilar effects. And, accordingly, in every kingdom of Europe, I am ſtill alluding to nations poſſeſſed of conſiderable territorial property, ſuch as France, Germany, and Italy, it is well known

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that, with ſcarcely any exception, agriculture has been moſt perfectly carried on where extenſive manufactures have never exiſted.

I do not from this mean to conclude, that manufactures in this country ought not to be encouraged; but I conſider it as a fair argument in ſupport of an opinion which I wiſh to eſtabliſh, that while any conſiderable part of our improveable territory is left neglected and unproductive, particularly while we are obliged to apply yearly to other nations for a large ſupply of corn, which an improved cultivation of our own fields would render unneceſſary, it is for the general intereſt and ſecurity of every part of the realm, that the moſt deciſive encouragement ſhould be given to agriculture: by which abundance being ſecured of all the neceſſaries of life, with their conſtant concomitant, an extenſive population, every manufacture in the kingdom might then with more propriety be encouraged, than can with ſafety be done at preſent.

Some have been induced to ſuppoſe, and even boldly to aſſert, that the agriculture of Great Britain cannot be brought to a higher ſtate of perfection than that to which it has already attained; but this is ſo entirely contrary to fact, that all who are verſed in rural affairs will admit, that, with due encouragement, our agriculture might with eaſe be improved ſo as to yield conſiderably more than double; probably, three times the preſent amount of it. For it is not merely the commons, and thoſe

grounds uſually termed waſtes, and of which the quantity over the nation is very great, which require improvement: on almoſt every farm, except perhaps in a few diſtricts of naturally rich ſoil, and which have long been in a ſtate of high cultivation, every farmer will allow, that with more ample funds, the produce might be greatly increaſed; by which we might not only be rendered at all times, and in all circumſtances, completely independent of other nations for our ſupplies of corn, but enabled to ſupport a much more extenſive population! Objects of ſuch magnitude and importance, that, in the view of national ſtrength, ſecurity, and comfort, ſcarcely any other can be compared to.

Nor would it be either difficult or expenſive to give ſuch encouragement to this ſource of wealth and proſperity, as, in no great length of time, would carry it to a degree of perfection which it may otherwiſe never be able to attain. All that a ſcheme for this purpoſe appears to require, is an annual allowance in money, which the nation, even in the expenſive war in which it is engaged, appears to be ſufficiently able to afford; this money to be placed under the direction of the board of agriculture, and of others in the different counties which that board ſhould direct.

A ſmaller ſum might perhaps anſwer the purpoſe; but where great objects are in view, nothing trifling or unimportant ſhould be brought forward. Having

maturely

maturely conſidered the nature and importance of the ſubject, the yearly allowance of fifteen hundred thouſand pounds, appears to be the leaſt that ſhould be propoſed for it, which may either be obtained in the manner which in the firſt of theſe eſſays I have ventured to ſuggeſt, from the general aſſeſſment of income; or from the produce of the land-tax, if landholders ſtill continue to be charged with it, and if purchaſers do not appear for it, as moſt probably will be the caſe; or if neither of theſe modes of raiſing the money for this purpoſe ſhall be approved of, it ſhould be furniſhed from ſome other national fund, and given as a retribution to thoſe from whom it ought not for a conſiderable time paſt to have been taken: I mean to the proprietors and improvers of the whole territory of the kingdom, who, although now the pooreſt claſs in the community, have yearly been loaded with the payment of two millions over and above their proportions of other aſſeſſments; a ſum with which they would have been enabled, for theſe fifty years paſt, to improve four hundred thouſand acres yearly more than they have done; from which the moſt important advantages muſt long ſince have ariſen, not only to all proprietors of land, but to the whole empire.

Of the ſum which I have mentioned, I would propoſe, that half a million ſhould be given in premiums yearly, through the medium of the board of agriculture, connected with provincial or county

eſtabliſhments

eſtabliſhments of the ſame kind: in each county a ſum to be diſtributed, correſponding to its extent and importance, and entirely under the direction of its own board, which ought to be formed partly of proprietors, and in part of intelligent farmers, who ſhould receive general inſtructions from the national board on points chiefly requiring their attention; but with full powers to adjudge the premiums of their own diſtricts, independent of all controul, in order to prevent with certainty all chance of jobbing or unequal diſtribution, together with the jealouſies and complaints which that would produce.

The ſums to be thus appropriated for premiums would be very conſiderable: on an average each county would receive upwards of ſix thouſand pounds ſterling yearly; the influence of which, in exciting and promoting a ſpirit of improvement in every branch of agriculture, would probably be great beyond any thing that in this or any other country has ever taken place.

As it ought to be the great and leading object of every agricultural inſtitution to provide againſt every chance of famine, and thus to render the country independent of foreign aſſiſtance, the premiums to be given by county boards ought to have the encouragement of thoſe articles chiefly in view which would more particularly act in this manner. For promoting, however, the growth of corn, direct premiums for the greateſt number of

acres

acres kept in grain might do harm; farmers being in general inclined to have more of their grounds in crops of corn than is consistent either with their own interest, or with that of the community. The premiums therefore which have the encouragement of corn crops chiefly in view, would be applied with more propriety and advantage for the raising of those crops which not only serve as the best preparation for every variety of corn, but which at the same time afford a direct supply of food, both for man and beast.

Of these, none will doubt that the preference should be given to potatoes, which succeed so well in a great variety of climates, with so few instances of failure, and afford such a large proportion of food, that they well may be termed the root of abundance. Were that quantity of potatoes to be planted yearly which every farm may easily have, famine would never be heard of. From seasons being particularly bad, we might occasionally have a scarcity of corn of every kind; but in every season we might depend on a full supply of this wholesome article of food, which rarely or never fails. One farmer may have a worse crop of potatoes than another, or the crop may be less abundant, and even not so good over an extensive district, as it is in others; but they never fail to produce a very large supply of food, in proportion to the quantity of ground on which they grow.

1. With the view of encouraging a full ſupply of this important article, I would propoſe that three hundred pounds ſterling ſhould be given yearly, in each county, for the beſt crop on the largeſt quantity of ground. The quantity not to be leſs than a hundred acres, and the ground to be afterwards ſown with wheat, barley, or oats, - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 300 0 0

For the next largeſt quantity of the beſt crop of potatoes, not leſs than forty acres, - - - - 100 0 0

And for the third largeſt quantity, not leſs than twenty-five acres, - - - - - - - - - 50 0 0

All to be managed according to the rules of good huſbandry to be furniſhed by the board of every county.

2. In like manner, for the three greateſt quantities of land, not leſs than one hundred acres in the largeſt, forty in the ſecond, and twenty-five in the third, of the beſt turnips, carrots, cabbages, or drilled beans or peaſe. The ground to be afterwards cropped with wheat, barley, or oats, - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 450 0 0

3. For the three largeſt products, of the heavieſt and beſt corn, whether wheat, barley, or oats; on quantities of land not leſs than one hundred acres, forty acres, and twenty-five acres, which, during the preceding year, ſhall have been in well managed fallow, the ground not having been in a fit ſtate for a drilled green crop, - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 450 0 0

4. For the three largeſt quantities of land properly manured with lime, marl, ſea ware, or ſhells, or any other article not produced upon the farm, of which the county board of agriculture ſhall approve; the quantities not to be leſs than a hundred acres, fifty acres, and twenty-five

Carried over 1350 0 0

Brought forward 1350 0 0

acres; and none of the quantities of ground for which this premium ſhall be given, to be allowed in competition in any enſuing year, for the premiums N° 1, 2, and 3, - - - - - - - - - 450 0 0

5. For the beſt management of farm-manure, and the greateſt quantities produced on farms of a given number of acres, one prize of three hundred pounds, another of one hundred, and a third of fifty pounds, - - - - - - - - - - - - 450 0 0

6. For the greateſt number of good horſes which any farmer ſhall breed and rear, the number to be allowed in competition not being leſs than twenty, three hundred pounds ſterling; for the next largeſt number, not leſs than ten, one hundred pounds; and for the third claſs, not being leſs than ſix, fifty pounds, - - - - - - - - 450 0 0

7. For the three greateſt numbers of the beſt breed of black cattle, particularly for oxen employed in tillage; the numbers to be allowed in competition for each prize to be fixed by the county board of agriculture, - - - - - - - - - - - 450 0 0

8. For the three greateſt numbers of the beſt breed of ſheep; the numbers allowed as above being likewiſe to be fixed by the board of agriculture, - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 450 0 0

9. For the three largeſt and beſt managed dairies; the number of cows for the largeſt prize not being leſs than forty, for the ſecond twenty-five, and for the third fifteen, - - - - - - - 450 0 0

10. For the greateſt quantity of land kept in complete tillage, with the leaſt number of ſervants, horſes, and oxen, - - - - - - - - 300 0 0

11. For the greateſt quantity of planting on grounds completely encloſed, and in every other

Carried over £. 4350 0 0

Brought forward 4350 0 0

point under the beſt management, the rules for which to be given by the general board of agriculture, one prize of 400 *l.* the quantity not being leſs than one hundred acres; a ſecond prize of 200 *l.* the quantity not leſs than fifty acres; and a third of one hundred pounds, the quantity not being leſs than twenty-five acres, - - - - - - 700 0 0

12. For the beſt management of a farm in all its parts; in which I would include incloſing, draining, clearing the grounds of ſtones; neatneſs in tillage, and in the inſtruments employed in it; the largeſt, moſt uſeful, and beſt managed gardens and orchards; the complete deſtruction of weeds; as well as various other articles; one premium of three hundred pounds, one of a hundred pounds, and a third of fifty pounds, - - - - - - - 450 0 0

To this ſum would be to add an allowance for expence of management; but, as in every county in the kingdom, a ſufficient number of proprietors and farmers would appear without fee or reward, to take charge of the general buſineſs of the board, the real expence of this article would not be important; particularly, as much of the buſineſs of every pariſh might be eaſily managed by a committee of its own inhabitants, choſen for particular purpoſes by the county boards. So that the chief expence of management would conſiſt in rent for apartments in the county town, at which all general meetings would be held; together with ſalaries to a ſecretary and clerk, for all of which the yearly allowance of three hundred pounds may be ſuppoſed to be ſufficient, - - - - - - - - - - - - - 300 0 0

Carried over £. 5800 0 0

Brought forward	5800	0	0
And laſtly, an allowance ſhould be made for various unforeſeen contingencies to which the inſtitution might probably be expoſed, which I ſhall eſtimate at - - - - - - - - - - -	300	0	0
£.	6100	0	0

On the allowance of half a million yearly to be diſtributed among all the counties in the kingdom, in proportion to their extent and other circumſtances, this ſum of ſix thouſand one hundred pounds would be nearly a medium of the whole: ſome of the largeſt would be entitled indeed to a great deal more; in which there might either be two diſtricts, with an agricultural board for each; or the number of premiums might be increaſed.

The next, and not the leaſt important part of the plan, conſiſts in the application of the other part of the ſum which I have ſuppoſed the nation ſhould allow for the improvement of agriculture, amounting yearly to a million ſterling.

This ſum I would propoſe to be lent free of intereſt, for a period of twenty years, to proprietors and farmers who might apply for it poſſeſſed of grounds which the Board of Agriculture for the county ſhould judge to be capable of improvement; the money to be entirely at the diſpoſal of the county boards, who ſhould be directed to ſee it properly applied, and to take ſufficient ſecurity for the repayment of the principal ſums: and as it ſhould not be given in a greater proportion than

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five pounds ſterling for every acre to be improved, a ſum which all improvers would be thankful on theſe terms to accept, two hundred thouſand acres of land, which at preſent are nearly unproductive, would, from this ſource alone, be yearly brought to a ſtate of cultivation; the very important advantages of which are ſo obvious, that they need not here be enumerated.

As one million of this money would at the end of twenty years become due annually, if another million ſhould ſtill be given by the nation, two millions would thus be employed yearly in the ſame manner; by which, in a very ſhort period of time, all the grounds in the kingdom would be brought to the higheſt pitch of cultivation which they are capable of receiving; an event which there is no reaſon to ſuppoſe will ever take place if it be not done by this, or ſome other extraordinary exertion: for the expence of the cultivation of land is ſo great, and the profits ariſing from it ſo ſmall and uncertain, when compared with thoſe of trade and manufactures, that large capitals will ſeldom or never be employed in it, if public encouragement be not, in one form or another, given to it.

Hitherto our Board of Agriculture has proved of little utility to the nation, merely from the funds with which it has been ſupplied being totally inadequate to any important exertion. In order to prove uſeful, this board muſt have a large ſum to diſpoſe of yearly: premiums muſt be given; and,

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in the preſent opulent ſtate of the kingdom, theſe premiums, in order to excite the attention of farmers, muſt be ample. Small ſums would be of little or no avail; but to the amount affixed to each article in the foregoing ſcheme, they would give ſuch ſpirit to every branch of agriculture as none can be aware of who are not fully and intimately acquainted with the ſubject.

The more immediate advantages of the ſcheme would be, that it would quickly produce, as I have already obſerved, a more ample ſupply of all the neceſſaries of life than hitherto we have ever poſſeſſed; together with all thoſe beneficial effects which never fail to reſult from their being abundant. It would neceſſarily tend to a rapid increaſe of population; and, by exciting in our youth a greater bias for the improvement of land than for manufactures, it would render them more healthy; more attached to their country, and therefore more to be depended on for its protection, than men can in general be whoſe lives are uſually ſpent in diſſipation, as too frequently happens with the lower claſs of manufacturers, when collected, as they now commonly are, in large numbers together; and who ſeldom place any value on a country, but in proportion to the price which they receive in it for their workmanſhip. Exceptions to this are no doubt to be met with; but it muſt be admitted, that a nation whoſe youth conſiſts chiefly of manufacturers, will never be ſo ſecure or independent as it would be with the

ſame population employed in the cultivation of land.

That the views which I have ventured to ſuggeſt for this deſirable and interſting object, the improvement of the agriculture of our country, are the beſt that can be propoſed, I have not the vanity to imagine: In various parts they would need from time to time to be altered, particularly in the articles for which premiums are to be given, which in ſome counties might be very different from thoſe to which they ought to be applied in others: In ſome they might be given in a greater proportion for the encouragement of tillage, while in others they ſhould be chiefly applied to the improvement of the breed of cattle. The foregoing plan is held forth merely for the purpoſe of having the ſubject more fully conſidered by the nation, and if poſſible, by government, than hitherto it appears to have been; and if this ſhall ever be done, and more ample funds appropriated to the Board of Agriculture, much more perfect plans will be brought forth by the united efforts of thoſe engaged in this important ſource of our national wealth and proſperity than any individual can poſſibly produce.—From theſe it would quickly appear, that in the proſecution of any extenſive ſcheme for agricultural improvements, all our commons ſhould be divided; the crown lands be diſpoſed of; tythes be done away, by ſelling them to the proprietors by whom they are paid, or in any other manner that

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may be judged better; and that the management of the poor ſhould be put on a different footing.

With a view alſo of diverting the national attention from that rage, or ſtrong propenſity, which for ſome time paſt has prevailed in it for extenſive manufactures, it might be an important object with an agricultural plan of improvement, to combine, as far as it can with propriety be done, the practice of agriculture with that of the manufacturer; not by giving manufacturers the charge of large farms, but by allotting to all who ſhould wiſh for it, and wherever it could be done, a ſufficient quantity of ground for a garden, and for the maintenance of one or two cows.

Some, indeed, have imagined that this ought not to be done, being of opinion that the two employments muſt be carried on to greater perfection when divided, than they can poſſibly be by one perſon. But while in one view the obſervation is ſufficiently proper and well founded, in others it certainly is not. A manufacturer would no doubt be unfit to manage any large agricultural undertaking, but it does not appear how in any way he could be hurt by having the charge of a few acres; which would commonly be all kept in graſs for his cows, excepting ſuch parts of it as he might wiſh to work with the ſpade for the production of garden ſtuffs and potatoes for his family. Even this occaſional occupation with the ſpade, however, would in the opinion of many prove injurious to manufacturers, from their

being afraid that it would occupy time which otherwiſe might be employed with more advantage and profit. But men who argue in this manner, build their opinion on ſpeculation, and not on practice and obſervation. They do not conſult the nature of man, who muſt have ſome variety in his purſuits, otherwiſe he will be unhappy; and we all know how unproductive that labour muſt be while thoſe by whom it is carried on are in a ſtate of diſcontent. It appears indeed to be too harſh and ſevere to inſiſt on a weaver ſpending every inſtant of his time at his loom, or a ſmith at his anvil: accordingly it is ſeldom or never done; for this claſs of men, when deprived of the more rational occupation of working and taking charge of a ſmall portion of ground for the benefit of their families, ſeldom fail to ſpend a conſiderable part of their time in the ale-houſe, and not more than a few days of every week in buſineſs. Whereas it is almoſt every where remarked, that this ſeldom happens with any of thoſe who have not hitherto been collected together, but working ſeparately, and often at a diſtance from each other, commonly poſſeſs a few acres of ground, in the management of which they not only derive amuſement and happineſs, but they and their children, while employed in this manner, become more robuſt and healthy, and imbibe much more virtuous principles than are commonly met with among thoſe manufacturers who do not enjoy this advantage.

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The influence of this is very remarkable in the difference which, in these circumstances, takes place, between cotton manufacturers, who in general are collected together in great numbers, often to the extent of more than a thousand, and those who carry on the manufacture of our national broad-cloth, who, almost every where, work separately and unconnected with each other, and employ all the hours which they devote to relaxation and amusement, in the care of their garden and other small portions of ground which they happen to possess; to which they and their families become commonly so much attached, that they have been known to remain in them, small as their properties commonly are, for many generations. Nor does the possession of this variety make them worse tradesmen, or induce them to work less, as some speculative men have supposed it would do: while, in various ways, it tends to make them more virtuous citizens, this class of manufacturers are every where noted for their industry, and for the quantity of cloth which they produce; and we all know that the article itself, which has long been considered as the staple commodity of our country, is the best and most perfect of its kind that any where can be met with.

Some manufactures necessarily require the united labour of many workmen: but this is not frequent; nor do we know of any which require such numbers to be employed in one body as to prevent the

poſſibility of their being all ſupplied with ſmall poſſeſſions of two or three acres. It may be for the intereſt of a few large money-proprietors to collect manufacturers in great numbers together, and thus to enjoy the profits of their accumulated labour; but this being productive of the moſt deſtructive conſequences, both to the morals and health of thoſe whom they employ, and thereby detrimental to the whole nation, it is ſurely full time that to the very extenſive length to which undertakings of this kind are now frequently carried, ſome check or regulation ſhould be applied.

The moſt deſirable, and perhaps the moſt effectual mode of doing this, would be, for the Board of Agriculture, when poſſeſſed of powers and funds ſufficient for the purpoſe, to bring forth and ſupport a plan for giving to every manufacturer, in all diſtricts which admit of it, two, three, or four acres of ground, according to the richneſs of the ſoil and other circumſtances of his ſituation. The deſire which univerſally prevails among the lower claſſes of people for this kind of poſſeſſion, being every where great, were a plan of this kind to take place, a great proportion of manufacturers, who are now collected in large bodies, would ſeparate, and become more induſtrious, more uſeful, and better members of ſociety, than they are ever likely to be while their preſent mode of life is purſued.

In various ways, a ſcheme of this kind would prove uſeful, both to farmers and proprietors of land,

land, as well as to manufacturers. If unimproved grounds were in general allotted for this purpose, of which almost every farm in the kingdom contains a proportion, a very considerable quantity, to the extent of several millions of acres, which are now almost altogether unproductive, might thus be quickly improved to the highest degree of cultivation, and at little or no expence; for small portions of land, possessed in this manner by individuals, are managed with no other expenditure of time, the chief article of expence, it may be remarked, with which all agricultural improvements are attended, than of that which would be otherwise spent in idleness. The very highest value would be given for ground occupied in this manner; and by a great proportion of manufacturers being dispersed over the kingdom, their wives and children would, in busy seasons, prove an useful and important addition to the numbers usually employed in farming operations.

I also think, that, with the view of adding to the comfort and happiness of a very useful set of men, our national schoolmasters, who hitherto have not been properly taken care of, a small portion of ground, sufficient for a garden and for the maintenance of one or two cows, should be allotted to each of them.

Even this I would consider as an important agricultural improvement; for every acre which might thus be given to schoolmasters, and the same observation will apply to those portions of land which may

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be allotted to manufacturers, would yield more than double the quantity which it commonly does when forming part of an extenſive farm. In the one caſe it is ſeldom either fully cultivated or manured; whereas in the other, as every part of it would be repeatedly wrought with the ſpade, and be regularly furniſhed with very ample ſupplies of manure, every ſpot, occupied in this manner, would quickly arrive at the higheſt ſtate of fertility to which it could poſſibly be brought; with the advantage alſo, as I have already obſerved, of being done with little or no expenditure of time which otherwiſe would have been employed in any uſeful purſuit.

Theſe, as well as many other improvements which the ſtate of our agriculture appears to require, may, at firſt view, ſeem to be attended with difficulties not likely to be ſurmounted. But if ſufficient funds ſhall be given to the Board of Agriculture, every difficulty will vaniſh; nor would the funds which might be aſſigned for this purpoſe remain long in an unproductive ſtate even in the view of pecuniary remuneration to the public. I think it probable, if this were done, that in the courſe of ten or twelve years, perhaps even in leſs, we ſhould draw from other nations, in return for corn, double the amount yearly of all that I have propoſed to allow for it, inſtead of ſending thoſe large ſums abroad which we are now doing for grain daily.

The only objection, therefore, that can proba-

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bly occur to the plan of encouraging agriculture by an allotment of premiums, namely, the expence with which it muſt be attended, would thus be entirely done away. But, admitting that this might be uncertain, ſtill we ſhould not conſider the money employed in a ſcheme for this purpoſe as loſt: the whole of it would not only remain in the nation, but, being generally diffuſed amongſt the moſt induſtrious ſet of the community, the ſame ſum would act in a tenfold degree, in anſwering the purpoſe for which it ſhould be given: every premium adjudged to a farmer would be quickly employed in carrying on farther improvements; from which, and from the additional ſpirit which they would excite, premiums to the extent of half a million yearly, would act in the improvement of our national agriculture, in a degree of which no calculation can be made; and, in the ſame proportion, they would quickly refund not only the whole capital which might be employed in them, but the moſt abundant intereſt, that money in any other ſituation was ever known to afford, by the various and important advantages which they would ſoon yield to the people in every claſs of ſociety. At no very diſtant period, indeed, the moſt conſiderable part of this annual allowance from the nation would become unneceſſary. I allude to the yearly loan of a million without intereſt for the purpoſe of improving grounds that are now nearly or entirely unproductive, from a deficiency of funds. I think

it probable, that in the ſpace of twenty-five or thirty years, no farther advances would for this part of the plan be required; as, in the courſe of that time, the whole improvable grounds in the nation would be ſo far advanced in cultivation, that the ſum which at that time would be lent out, being continued without farther advances for twenty years longer, would be ſufficient for the purpoſe; at which period a million yearly would either revert to the national funds, from thoſe to whom it might be lent at the time; or it might be continued longer, till all the lands in the kingdom ſhould be improved to the higheſt pitch of perfection of which they ſhould be judged to be capable.

The very important benefits which thus would reſult from an improved ſtate of our agriculture, but which cannot be obtained if public encouragement be withheld from it, might accordingly be ſoon in our poſſeſſion, by the operation of the very moderate yearly allowance which I have ventured to mention as the ſum which the ſcheme would require.

There is therefore much reaſon to hope, if our landed proprietors will unite, and apply to Government with a well-digeſted plan for this purpoſe, that full ſupport will be obtained for it. And in what manner could an expenditure to this amount be ſo uſefully employed?—If the miniſter will reſolutely come forward and ſay, that he is reſolved to place no more taxes on conſumption, but to

truſt entirely to a certain proportion of income, and to abandon the funding ſyſtem, the national wealth is at preſent ſo great, that he may raiſe a ſufficiency for this and every other purpoſe, without acting with ſeverity on any part of the community. And if at the ſame time he will give his ſupport to this or any other ſcheme for the more complete improvement of our national territory, the ſatisfaction, and additional vigour, which thus would be given to the community, would be of more real avail, both in preventing diſturbances at home, and in repelling attacks from abroad, than any other meaſure is perhaps able to afford. Our fleets and armies have completely done their duty; the commerce of every nation that has appeared againſt us, is nearly annihilated; their navies are deſtroyed, and their coaſts expoſed to every attack that we may incline to make upon them; while ours are protected by our victorious fleets, and by ſuch a formidable military eſtabliſhment as we never before poſſeſſed! But as theſe means of ſafety cannot at all times be kept up, it appears now to be incumbent on thoſe to whom our national concerns are intruſted, to do all in their power for our complete ſecurity in future, when theſe eſtabliſhments may be done away; for which purpoſe, nothing can be equal to that ſtate of the nation, which there is reaſon to ſuppoſe would ariſe from the diminution and ultimate removal of our public debt; and from thoſe habits of life which our youth, over

the whole nation, would acquire on their views being chiefly directed to agricultural purſuits, a courſe of life which never fails to create ſuch national attachment as no country has ever been known to poſſeſs, whoſe chief dependence has been placed on wealth acquired in any other manner.

If the various advantages which Great Britain derives from her extenſive commerce, her powerful fleets, and inſular ſituation; and eſpecially from that enthuſiaſm and zeal which all who live under her equitable and mild laws univerſally feel for her protection, be combined with that full attention to the practice of agriculture, which alone can render her independent of other nations for her ſubſiſtence; even the preſent generation will enjoy the ſatisfaction to perceive, that the ſame degree of uninterrupted happineſs with which they and their forefathers have been bleſſed, is to deſcend to their lateſt poſterity! for in that caſe they will ſee, that the means of protection with which the inhabitants of this envied land are provided, are not to be exhauſted; and that their power of uſing them would at all times be irreſiſtible.

O fortunatos nimium ſua ſi bona nôrint
BRITANNOS!

THE END.